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# LECTURES.

ON THE

## HISTORY OF CHRISTIANITY.

---

BY GEORGE W. BURNAP,

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Author of LECTURES TO YOUNG MEN and LECTURES ON THE SPHERE AND DUTIES  
OF WOMAN, &c.

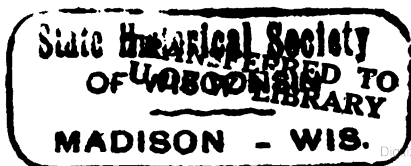
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## P R E F A C E.

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BELIEVING as I do, that the Scriptures contain a revelation from God, and that they are the main source of all that is most valuable in modern civilization, the only sure ground of hope for man here and hereafter, I have ever esteemed them the worthiest subject of study and investigation. To understand the sacred records completely, and to comprehend the wisdom of the Divine plan, which arranged the time, the place, and the circumstances of the advent of the Author and Finisher of our faith, has never been granted to any human mind. To the understanding of this most interesting subject any original inquirer may contribute something, and he has the satisfaction of knowing that no particle of truth is ever lost. However humble the source from which it emanates, it is cast into the common treasury of the human mind, and does something to help

forward the grand approximation towards the truth, which is constantly going on while the ages roll away.

The first requisite to the understanding of the New Testament is a thorough knowledge of the circumstances, opinions and expectations of the age of Christ and the Apostles. When these are ascertained, the darkest passages become plain and intelligible. We learn immediately to draw the necessary distinction between substance and form, between the essential truths of Christianity, and the mode of representation by which they were adapted to a particular people, between figures of speech and literal statements, between logical proof and analogical illustration, between the language of the heart and affections and that of the reason and intellect, between what is fundamental and eternal, and what is accessory and transitory.

But the most precious fruit of biblical research, is the entire prostration of the walls of sectarian prejudice and exclusiveness. No one can proceed far without discovering, that the principal controversies which have divided the church, have been upon points either unimportant in themselves, or entirely foreign to Christianity. A moderate degree of criti-

cal learning, combined with any measure of candor and fairness, would suffice, either to settle most of the controversies in existence, or to demonstrate that it is of little importance which way they are decided.

I have only to request that those who read these lectures will do so with the Bible in their hands, and turn to the passages which are cited. By connecting these quotations with the context, they will be enabled to judge whether I have given them the true interpretation.

I invite particular attention to the concluding lecture, as it embodies in few words the results of years of laborious investigation. The view which is there given, combines the conclusions of many independent inquirers. It will bear, I believe, the test of reason, of learning, and of time, and presents the results to which research on all sides is gradually, though inevitably tending. That the positions I have advanced in these lectures will commend themselves to the mere sectarian, into whose hands they may chance to fall, I have no reason to expect, and I shall not be disappointed if I meet with entire approbation no where. I only ask a candid hearing, and to be met by arguments drawn from the facts of the case,



and not by appeals to traditionary opinion, and partizan prejudice.

In quoting from the Scriptures, I have used the common translation, in all cases in which the meaning of the original is fully represented, and have varied from it only where the sense could be more accurately expressed.

BALTIMORE, *July*, 1842.

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# LECTURES

ON THE

## HISTORY OF CHRISTIANITY.

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### Lecture I.

---

#### ON THE PROVIDENTIAL PREPARATION OF THE WORLD FOR THE ADVENT OF THE REDEEMER.

---

IN undertaking the Course of Lectures, of which this is the first, on the History of Christianity, I have been prompted by the desire of adding greater interest to our Sunday evening exercises, by treating a class of subjects which cannot appropriately be introduced into ordinary religious instruction, and by imparting a species of knowledge which can be obtained only by long study and access to ample libraries, yet which renders the records of our faith more interesting and intelligible than they can be without such collateral information. As it happens, the New Testament is almost the only record of the times and the nation of which it treats, which is accessible to



most readers. It gives a knowledge of the state of the world as it then was, only incidentally. Of the times preceding, it gives us no idea. Between the last page of Malachi and the first of Matthew, though separated by a few blank leaves of our common bibles, there intervened a period of almost five hundred years, during which the face of the world and the condition of mankind were more changed than they ever have been in the same time, if we except the period since the discovery of America.

If we look at the world as we see it through the pages of Ezra, Nehemiah, and Haggai, the last of the Old Testament writers, we see the nation of the Jews just returned from a seventy years' captivity, recommencing their national existence after having been overrun and absorbed in the first great monarchy that swept over the earth. Their acquaintance with the rest of the world was very limited, only extending to the Chaldeans, the Phenicians, the Egyptians, and a few inconsiderable tribes. Their ideas seem to be limited likewise, and to extend but little beyond the principles of the Mosaic religion, which had been promulgated about fifteen centuries before.

We open the New Testament and a new scene presents itself. Judea and Jerusalem are filled with new people, of strange costume, manners, and language. We read that the accusation of Jesus was written over him as he hung upon the cross, in He-

brew, and Greek, and Latin. Whence came these foreign dialects? When the Old Testament was closed the Greek was scarcely a written language, confined to a small corner of Europe; and Rome, from which the Latin language went abroad, was a straggling village upon the banks of the Tyber. Of this whole period, in which nations and monarchies had been born and flourished and decayed, the Bible gives us no trace. Our introduction into Judea in the New Testament is therefore altogether abrupt and unprepared.

To give some general idea of these preceding events, I shall devote the first part of the series to the Providential preparation of the world for the advent of the Redeemer, and the circumstances in the condition of the human race, which made that period a conjuncture most opportune for the introduction of a spiritual and universal religion. To this gradual preparation of the world for the coming of the Messiah, Paul seems to have alluded in his Epistle to the Galatians, in the fourth chapter, fourth verse, where he uses the following expression: "But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son." Likewise in his speech to the Athenians on Mars' Hill, he seems to have the same thing in view where he says, "that God hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on the face of the whole earth, and hath determined the times before

appointed, and the bounds of their habitation, that they should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after him and find him, though he be not far from any one of us." That is, if I understand it aright, that God has arranged the position and existence of the several nations of the earth in such a manner as to promote the recognition, the establishment, and the propagation of the true religion, the knowledge and worship of the true God. To illustrate this position is the main purpose of this introductory discourse, that God so established the Jews as to their geographical position, and so ordained their relations to other nations as to promote the general knowledge of the true God, and prepare the way for the introduction through Christ of a spiritual and universal religion.

Whatever knowledge of the true God may have been imparted to the ancestors of our race, or however long it may have lasted, certain it is that at the time of Abraham the nations generally had fallen into idolatry. To him God was pleased to make himself known, and to promise, "that of him he would make a great nation, and in him and in his seed all the nations of the earth should be blessed," that is, through him and his posterity he would impart to them the greatest possible good, the knowledge of the true God. To accomplish this purpose God selected the spot in which he and his posterity were to be placed.

And no spot on earth could have been more opportune for the purpose, the land of Canaan, afterwards called Judea, afterwards Palestine, a tract of country situated about the middle point between the three great divisions of the earth, Asia, Africa and Europe, on the great high road of nations, in the very path of conquest, commerce, and travel, equally accessible to all parts of the then known world. But in the time of Abraham those circumstances did not exist, which afterwards made Judea so favorable a location for the radiating point of the true faith. There was then neither conquest, nor commerce, nor travel. The world was then overspread by wandering tribes, scarcely having boundaries or a fixed habitation. Chaldea, the cradle of the human race, and Egypt, the birth place of learning and the arts, were the only considerable nations. In the time of Abraham it is not probable that any such thing as alphabetic writing existed, for we read that he took no other evidence of the purchase which he made of a burying place for his family than living witnesses of the bargain. At that period, therefore, divine communications must have been confined to individuals. The fulness of time had not then come even for that partial revelation which was made by Moses. There was no mode by which revelation could be recorded and preserved. The invention of writing was necessary to prepare the world for that. That invention

is thought to have taken place some time within the five hundred years which elapsed between Abraham and Moses. Into Egypt, the mother of the Arts, the posterity of Abraham were sent as if to school, not in divine things, for in the knowledge of divine things the shepherds of Canaan as far exceeded the refined Egyptians as light exceeds darkness, but in the knowledge of those things by which life is rendered comfortable. When they had become sufficiently numerous to take possession of the destined territory, a leader was raised up for that especial purpose, Moses, the child of a bond slave, his life exposed in infancy in a frail cradle of bulrushes upon the waters, yet destined to be the mightiest agent in the affairs of men that the Almighty has ever employed on earth, with the exception of him who proclaimed himself the Light of the world. Who can but admire the wisdom of Divine Providence in the education of this great Founder of a nation, this prophet of divine truth, this enlightener of the world! Who can apprehend the glorious position which he holds in the world's history! What a distinction to have framed the constitution of a nation, which lasted fifteen hundred years, and stamped a people with marks of nationality which more than three thousand years have not obliterated; to have written a book which has been read with interest and ardor by revolving ages and growing millions of the human race, to impart to nations and

continents the saving knowledge of the one true God ! What a glory by one sentence to have laid the foundation of true religion in so many millions of minds. "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." The more we contemplate the mission of Moses, the higher will its moral sublimity rise in our estimation. Contemplate him during the forty years sojourn in the wilderness. He was the only depository of the true religion on earth. With the exception of the tribes he led, the whole world was sunk in the debasement of idolatry. What a noble use did the Almighty make of the recent invention of man's ingenuity, the invention of letters, to engrave on stone his awful testimony against the great fundamental and all polluting sin of the world, the worship of idols ! "Thou shalt have no other gods before me. Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or the likeness of any thing that is in heaven above or in the earth beneath ; thou shalt not bow down thyself to them nor serve them."

To realize and carry out this one principle alone was the whole object of the separate existence of the Jewish nation, and it took fifteen hundred years to do it. So prone were men in a rude state, in that age, and probably in all ages, to substitute the seen for the unseen, to worship the creature instead of the Creator, that forty days had not elapsed from the utterance from Sinai of this fundamental precept,

"Thou shalt have no other gods before me," when the very people to whom it had been commanded, made for themselves a golden calf after the manner of the idolatrous Egyptians, and danced around it in senseless joy. To secure this one single fundamental point, the worship of the only living and true God, the whole Mosaic economy was contrived. For this purpose they were forbidden to intermarry with foreigners, for this purpose their sacrifices were all to be offered in one place, and by one family of priests, lest they should wander away, and become corrupted by other religions. For this purpose they were forbidden certain kinds of food, such as were offered in sacrifice to heathen deities, that they might not be present at idolatrous feasts, and become accustomed to those moral abominations with which heathen worship was invariably accompanied. More effectually to secure this point, Divine Providence so arranged it that their national existence and prosperity depended on their fidelity to the great purpose for which they were set apart. Whenever they worshipped the true God and obeyed his laws, temporal prosperity was the natural consequence. Then was union and peace, and industry and prosperity. Whenever they forsook God and worshipped idols, a corresponding degeneracy of morals and manners took place. This was followed by discord, weakness, poverty, and subjection to foreign nations.

But the event which exerted the most decisive influence upon the national existence of the Jews was the erection of Solomon's temple at Jerusalem. Before that time, their sacred rites had been conducted in a very humble and uncertain manner. Their sacred utensils had no better covering than a tent, often they were in private custody; and once the sacred Ark itself, which contained the heaven derived charter of their national existence, was taken captive and remained for months in the country of the Philistines. That ark in fact for near four hundred years was almost the only bond of their national union, the only object around which was gathered their national reverence. And although in our younger years we are apt to regard that ark and its contents with a childish curiosity, our after years come to look upon it as an object of higher significance. It was the written testimony of God against idolatry. It contained the fundamental articles of a nation's constitution. It was a charter from God for a nation's establishment and independence. It was a declaration of principles, which was borne before them like a banner, proclaiming to the world for what they were to live, for what they were to fight, and for what they were to die. It was a confession of faith, which they upheld before the world as sacred, and true, and vital to the best interests of humanity. To compare sacred things with profane, it occupied the same place in their



constitution that the fundamental declaration does in ours, "that all men are born free and equal," the principle which we hold forth to the world, and on which we stake our national honor and our national existence. Once abandon this and we are lost, disgraced, fallen forever. On the tables in that ark was written, "Thou shalt have no other gods before me, and thou shalt not make any graven image, nor the likeness of any thing, thou shalt not bow down thyself to them nor serve them." There it remained from age to age as the memorial of the purpose of their national existence. And mightily did it work in the earth.

There is an incident related by the sacred historian, which may seem symbolical of the mission of the whole dispensation which that sacred enclosure contained. It is in the fifth chapter of the first book of Samuel: "And the Philistines took the Ark and brought it from Ebenezer to Ashdod. When the Philistines took the Ark of God they brought it into the house of Dagon, and set it by Dagon. And when they of Ashdod arose early on the morrow, behold, Dagon was fallen upon his face to the earth before the Ark of the Lord. And they took Dagon and set him in his place again. And when they arose early on the morrow morning, behold, Dagon was fallen upon his face to the ground again before the Ark of the Lord, and the head of Dagon and the palms of

his hands were cut off upon the threshold, only the stump of Dagon was left unto him." So was all idolatry destined to fall before the recorded word of the Almighty. What was achieved in the temple of Azotus was gradually accomplished throughout the land of Israel. Many times was Dagon set up in his place again. Many a time idolatry revived, the Ark of God was in the hands of the enemy, and the true religion about to be extinguished, when the Almighty interposed to vindicate his honor, and re-establish his worship, and at last obtained a triumph by the very means which at first sight threatened to overthrow it forever.

I have said that the objects of the national existence of the Jews were greatly promoted by the building of the temple at Jerusalem. It was a splendid edifice, calculated to awaken the curiosity, to attract the attention, and command the respect of the world. It furnished a place of appropriate convenience, beauty, and dignity, for the celebration of their daily sacrifices, and their national rites. It made more interesting their three yearly festivals, when all the males were obliged to present themselves before God. It gave them what we all want, some fixtures to their religion, a local habitation to their religious affections and associations. It connected the sentiment of religion with another no less strong, that of patriotism; and enlisted them both in the maintenance and defence

of the national institutions of Moses. It led to the formation of a national literature, which gave expression to these two most powerful sentiments of the human bosom, and thus operated to call forth and strengthen them in each succeeding generation.

That literature is preserved in part in the Psalms, which taken together are the most exquisite specimens of lyric poetry that the world has ever seen. In them may be distinctly read the deep hold which the national religion, and particularly the temple worship at Jerusalem, had taken upon the feelings of the people. The one hundred and twenty-second Psalm we may suppose was composed by some pious Israelite as he went up to one of the annual feasts. It breathes the essence of piety and patriotism:

"I was glad when they said unto me,  
Let us go into the house of the Lord.  
Our feet shall stand within thy gates, O Jerusalem.  
Jerusalem is builded as a city that is compact together,  
Whither the tribes go up, the tribes of the Lord  
Unto the testimony of Israel, to give thanks unto the name of  
the Lord.  
Pray for the peace of Jerusalem.  
They shall prosper that love thee.  
Peace be within thy walls,  
And prosperity within thy palaces;  
For my brethren and companions' sake  
I will now say, Peace be within thee;  
Because of the house of the Lord our God  
I will seek thy good."

Still the Mosaic institutions, assisted by the magni-

ficence of the temple service, failed to extirpate entirely the propensity to idolatry. Occasionally it sprang up and overspread the country, till at last the Almighty saw fit to suffer that temple to be overthrown, his people to be carried into captivity, and his worship to be suspended for seventy years. And his judgments accomplished what his mercies could not effect. That very measure of divine severity, which at first sight threatened to destroy the worship of the true God from the face of the earth, and give up the world to the interminable dominion of idolatry, was the means of establishing it on a firmer basis than ever. Although Jerusalem was overthrown, and the temple razed to its foundation, the captive Jews carried the true Jerusalem in their hearts. Wherever they were, in the splendid cities of the East, or amid the fascinations of Egypt, or the tents of the wandering shepherds, still their affections were in the Holy Land. Like Daniel they turned their faces in their prayers toward the place where they and their fathers had worshipped, or like Nehemiah, when serving in the courts of princes, they mourned and fasted when they heard "that the wall of Jerusalem was broken down, and her gates burned with fire." And that most exquisite elegy of some captive Jew, which we have in the one hundred and thirty-seventh Psalm, may be considered as expressing the sentiments of every captive who was led away into slavery.

“By the rivers of Babylon there we sat down,  
Yea, we wept when we remembered Zion.  
We hanged our harps upon the willows in the midst thereof,  
For they that carried us away captive required of us a song,  
And they that wasted us required of us mirth, saying,  
‘Sing us one of the songs of Zion.’  
How shall we sing the Lord’s song in a strange land?  
If I forget thee, O Jerusalem,  
Let my right hand forget her cunning!  
If I do not remember thee,  
Let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth,  
If I prefer not Jerusalem above my chief joy.”

There in slavery they had time and opportunity to reflect upon the causes of their calamities. There they read in the books of Moses, which were the companions of their exile, the awful curses which he had denounced against them if they forsook the worship of the true God, and felt them to be fulfilled in themselves. There they read the prophecy, which had been written by Moses almost a thousand years before, in the book of Deuteronomy: “If thou wilt not observe to do all the words of this law that are written in this book, that thou mayest fear this glorious and fearful name, the Lord thy God, the Lord will scatter thee among all people from one end of the earth even unto the other. And among these nations thou shalt find no ease, neither shall the sole of thy foot have rest, but the Lord shall give thee then a trembling heart, and failing eyes, and sorrow of mind. And thy life shall hang in doubt before

thee, and thou shalt fear night and day, and have no assurance of thy life. In the morning thou shalt say, 'Would God it were evening,' and in the evening, 'Would God it were morning,' for the fear of thine heart wherewith thou shalt fear, and for the sight of thine eyes which thou shalt see."

Smitten to the heart by the fulfilment of such awful threatenings, all propensity to idolatry was forever cured. Never after this period could the allurements of pleasure, nor the threats of pain, neither dens of wild beasts, nor the fiery furnace, neither instant death nor lingering torture, ever induce them to offer sacrifice to idol gods. That same Providence, which had scattered them in foreign lands, now restored them to their own. Their temple was rebuilt, the daily sacrifice was resumed, and was never intermitted, with the exception of about three years under Antiochus Epiphanes, till that great Personage appeared, who declared himself greater than the temple, for whose coming the Mosaic Economy had been preparatory, and who came not as the legislator of a nation, but as the Light of the world; and who declared that henceforth not in Jerusalem nor Mount Gerizim, nor any other particular spot, men should worship the Father, but wherever they could worship him in spirit and in truth.

Thus the mission of Moses was fulfilled. One nation was redeemed from idolatry, and consecrated

to the worship of the only living and true God. The way was prepared for the reception of a universal religion. Judaism under God was the means of introducing Christianity into the world, the original stock upon which the more perfect tree was engrafted. Having thus apparently accomplished the purposes of its existence, the nation soon ceased to be. Jerusalem was overthrown and trodden under foot of the Gentiles. Ruin drove her ploughshare through her crumbling walls, and a temple of an impostor now occupies the very site where abode the Ark of God, and where the Saviour taught. A remnant still survives, for what purpose is known to God alone. Perhaps they are to be restored once more to their native seats, still longer and more gloriously to testify to the truth of God's word.

“Fallen is thy throne, O Israel,  
Silence is on thy plains,  
Thy dwellings all lie desolate,  
Thy children weep in chains.  
Where are the dews that fed thee  
On Etham's barren shore?  
That fire from heaven that led thee,  
Now lights thy path no more.

Lord, thou didst love Jerusalem,  
Once she was all thy own;  
Her love thy fairest heritage,  
Her power thy glory's throne.

Till evil came and blighted  
Thy long loved olive tree,  
And Salem's shrines were lighted  
For other gods than thee.

Then sunk the star of Solyma,  
Then passed her glory's day,  
Like heath that in the wilderness  
The wild wind whirls away.  
Silent and waste her bowers  
Where once the mighty trod,  
And sunk those guilty towers  
Where Baal reigned as God.

Go, saith the Lord, ye conquerors  
Steep in her blood your swords,  
And raze to earth her battlements  
For they are not the Lord's;  
Tell Zion's mournful daughter  
O'er kindred bones she'll tread,  
And Hinnom's vale of slaughter  
Shall hide not half her dead.

But soon shall other pictured scenes  
In brighter vision rise,  
When Zion's sun shall seven fold shine  
On all her mourners' eyes,  
And on her beauteous mountains stand  
The messengers of peace,  
'Salvation from the Lord's right hand'  
They shout and never cease."

"But who shall see the glorious day  
When throned on Zion's brow,  
The Lord shall rend the veil away  
Which blinds the nations now;



## THE MOSAIC DISPENSATION.

When earth no more beneath the fear  
Of his rebuke shall lie ;  
When pain shall cease, and every tear  
Be wiped from every eye.

Then Judah, thou no more shalt mourn  
Beneath the heathen's chain,  
Thy days of splendor shall return  
And all be new again.  
The fount of life shall then be quaffed  
In peace by all who come ;  
And every wind that blows shall waft  
Some long lost exile home."

## Lecture II.

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### GREEK LITERATURE AND PHILOSOPHY.

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**MATTH. 5: 17.**—Think not that I am come to destroy the law and the prophets: I am not come to destroy but to fulfil.

No one can open the New Testament without perceiving, not only that the world has changed since the closing of the Old, but that it has advanced. No one can read the first discourse of Christ, for instance, without discovering, that it is adapted to a much higher state of intellectual cultivation than any part of the Old Testament. One is addressed to the childhood, the other to the maturity of man. One consists of precepts, the other of principles. In giving instructions to childhood we confine ourselves to precepts, minute and positive directions. If it is writing we define with all possible precision what must be done in certain emergencies. To a grown and intelligent man our manner is different. We give principles not precepts. We state our purposes, we give our reasons, we define our designs, and leave the application of our directions in some measure to his judgment. On the young we enjoin actions,

practices, habits, which we know to be salutary, without giving the reasons on which they are founded, and base them upon authority alone. With the mature we proceed differently. We give the reasons, we state principles, we enjoin actions, not so much grounded on our own authority, as the intuitive conviction of those we address, of what is proper and expedient.

Moses dealt in no abstractions, for the world could not then have seen their force. Christ reduced the whole Mosaic system to two great principles, "to love God with all the heart, and our neighbor as ourselves." You meet with no such statement of fundamental principles in all the Old Testament. Moses rests the observance of the Sabbath on the sanctity of the day, as well as its humanity and mercy. Christ declared that "the Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath." Moses addressed the senses, and the mind through them, he instituted a splendid ceremonial to impress the imaginations of a rude people. Indeed, the Mosaic religion was a sort of compromise between Paganism and a pure, spiritual religion. It brought mankind as far toward pure religion as they could come at one step. It was the worship of the true God by the same rites, which the heathen performed to their gods. Yet no thinking mind could ever suppose that the true God could be propitiated by the blood of bulls and goats. But

mankind in that age could have been drawn away from idolatry in no other way. When Christ came, the danger of idolatry was over, and he was able to establish the true worship, that of the spirit. From all these things, it is evident, at first glance, that the New Testament is addressed to a totally different state of mind from the Old, and to a condition of intellectual enlightenment, the like of which does not appear in the old dispensation.

It appears moreover in the existence of religious sects, the Sadducees and the Pharisees. Men never differ in opinion till they begin to think. They never can have opinions till they examine, reflect, discuss, define and reason. We hear nothing about sects among savages, nor in a state of semi-barbarism.

From all these sources, and from others which time would fail me to enumerate, it appears that the New Testament is directed and adapted to a state of intellectual cultivation altogether above that which is supposed in the institutions of the Mosaic religion. It is the purpose of this lecture to show how this cultivation was brought about. It made a part of the preparation of the world for the advent of the Redeemer. But intellectual cultivation is a matter which does not require any supernatural interference with the ordinary laws of the human mind, though it does not fall without that universal providence of God, which rules over all and extends to every thing that

takes place. God as much makes use of men, whom he has largely endowed with natural gifts, to instruct those of less capacity in human wisdom, as he does those to whom he communicates supernatural knowledge, to enlighten the world in what immediately concerns their soul's salvation. If God acknowledged such men as Cyrus and Alexander as the objects of his especial providence, by whom the political condition of the world was so widely affected, much more should we consider Socrates and Plato to have come into his great plan, men, by whose intellectual labors the condition of more of our race has been affected, than by the greatest conquerors, who have overrun the earth.

About the time when the Hebrew commonwealth was declining from the splendid reigns of David and Solomon, to the last feeble and profligate administrations of Jehoiakim and Zedekiah, when the light of prophecy was about becoming extinct in Zechariah and Malachi, a people were coming into notice in the south-eastern corner of Europe, the point nearest the Holy Land, which was destined to exert as extensive an influence upon the intellectual progress of the world, as Judea has upon its spiritual and religious advancement. A few wandering tribes had settled along the shores and among the isles of Greece, which seem to have received from God the highest natural gifts that were ever bestowed on man; a phy-

sical constitution, symmetrical, firm, powerful, and elastic, senses most acute and penetrating, sensibilities deep and susceptible, intellect subtile, accurate, and profound, an imagination glowing as their own luxurious climate and rich as their magnificent scenery. With these natural endowments they formed a language of corresponding excellence and perfection, a language which excels every other in that especial quality for which each one is distinguished. It has the simple grandeur of the Hebrew, more than the dignity of the Latin, the richness of the German, the colloquial grace of the French, with a greater precision even than is possessed by our native tongue. It was all this even before it possessed an alphabet, or before one sentence had been committed to writing. The oldest book we have, next to the Bible, we owe to this wonderful people. While Elijah and Elisha, those venerable forms, were seen in Palestine upholding by the sanctity of their lives, and the force of their prophetic powers, the tottering fabric of the Mosaic religion, a blind old man was wandering over Greece, chanting from village to village a poem, which he had composed on the siege of Troy. So delighted were his countrymen with his performance, that they were not satisfied with an occasional recitation. In the absence of books his verses were transcribed into other memories, and men made it their profession to repeat the poems of Homer.

About two centuries before, an adventurer from the coast of Phœnicia, from the neighborhood of the country where the Mosaic law had existed for six hundred years, had carried the alphabet used by Moses to the shores of Greece. The elements of their destiny were now complete. Grecian genius seized at once upon the results of ages of Egyptian art, and rose at one step into the intellectual supremacy of the world. The poems of Homer are the greatest literary miracle of all time, the greatest unaided achievement of the human intellect. Without a master or a guide, he reached a perfection which has never since been surpassed, and became the master and the model of all succeeding ages. The influence of his poems upon the national character was controlling and decisive. They fixed the language, the religious opinions, and moral sentiments of a powerful people. They were themselves the highest manifestation of intellect, and served in turn to awaken the intellect of others. In short, the works of Homer were the Bible of the Greeks, and exerted nearly the same influence upon them, which the Pentateuch exerted upon the Jews. Like the Bible, they have lived through all ages, have been read in all, they have gone wherever civilized man has wandered, and formed the literary taste, as the other has the religious opinions of the world. And even now, when we have accumulated the spoils of all nations and all

times, and the choice is absolutely bewildered among the multiplied productions of human genius, there is nothing which the man who wishes deeply to move, or powerfully to persuade his fellow-men, will find more profitable as an intellectual discipline, than to study the poems of Homer.

Such was the wonderful impetus given to the mind of Greece by the introduction of a written language, such the wonderful genius of that gifted people, that within two hundred years from the first collection of the poems of Homer, almost every species of literature, which has since been known was produced, every form of poetry, and every kind of prose; the rudiments of every science had been discovered, and almost every art cultivated. Orators were produced whose works are even yet studied, philosophers investigated with such depth and accuracy as to have exhausted almost the whole field of human inquiry. Their investigations, their eloquence, their science were committed to writing, and they have made the most important part of literature for all succeeding times. Their admirable language furnished ample resources for all these diversified purposes. Its graphic and pictorial beauty, its harmony and flexibility most admirably adapted it to the purposes of poetry. Its copiousness and clearness made it the apt instrument of the orator, and its accuracy and precision enabled the philosopher to grasp and define



with it the minutest distinctions in subjects the most abstruse. Wherever men thought and reasoned, and availed themselves of the labors of others, it was impossible that the Greek literature should not find its way. As long as it is the law of the mind to seek the best things that have ever been said on any subject, it is impossible that the Greek language and literature should not be the literature of the civilized world. Such is the language in which it pleased Divine Providence that the New Testament should be written. Of the causes which led to this result I shall speak in the next lecture.

Wherever this literature came, it produced a greater revolution than conquest or political institutions. It quickened mind, it produced an intellectual regeneration. It invaded the indolent and dreamy despotisms of Asia, and shook to the centre the mouldering fabrics of their ancient superstitions. It found its way into Egypt, and supplying that nation with a written language, divulged among the people that knowledge, which the priests had so carefully kept from them, and made the means of keeping them enslaved. It was carried by conquest into Judea. It enriched the Jewish mind, already possessing the pearl of great price in the knowledge of the true God, with a wide circle of ideas hitherto unknown. It led them to regard their sacred writings with the eye of philosophical speculation, as well as implicit

belief. It made to them the great truths of their religion the subjects of reasonable conviction instead of dogmatic inculcation, and based their faith on individual persuasion rather than traditionary authority. It led them to see that their law was founded on the reason of things, instead of arbitrary enactment, and seeing the object of its forms and ceremonies, they perceived that it was possible to attain that object by a shorter and simpler process. Thus the Grecian philosophy served to prepare the Jews themselves for the coming of the Messiah, to appreciate and comprehend that sublime and spiritual teaching, which left not only their own law, but the sublimest flights of heathen wisdom far behind, and made them feel when they heard his wonderful discourses that they were listening to a teacher, who spake as never man spake.

The surprising development of mind which took place in Greece, and the vast extension of human knowledge, contributed to prepare the world for Christ and his religion in another way. It opened the eyes of mankind to the falsehood, the folly, and the abominations of the pagan religions. Before that period the strong religious faith and affections of mankind fixed themselves upon the imaginary deities of the heathen world. Their faith in them was real and practical. By their providence they thought all things to be governed, to them they thought them-

selves responsible by the indissoluble obligations of their moral nature. He was considered impious, who did not recognize his allegiance by prayer and sacrifice, by libation and festival. To these things the common people were strongly attached by long accustomed habit and hereditary veneration. It was this religious belief, erroneous as it was, which gave sanction to oaths, and cemented those moral ties by which the very elements of society are kept together. On the pillars of a false religion then, was sustained not only the lesser fabric of private society, but the vast edifice of the state. He then, who called in question the religion of his country, was thought not only irreligious, but unpatriotic, not only an impious but a dangerous man.

Not only so; the people, when they saw their religious belief called in question, not only felt themselves endangered, but insulted; for no injury ever excites a more bitter and unrelenting resentment than to call a man and his ancestors fools.

But it was impossible for Paganism to bear the examination of an enlightened mind. No man, who had reflected at all upon the necessary nature and attributes of the Designer, the Creator, the Sustainer, and Governor of all things, could worship as that perfect, eternal, and unchangeable Spirit, Jupiter the son of Saturn, who himself had once been a man and reigned in Crete. As men's minds became more and

more informed, the silly legends which were related of their deities must have seemed more and more absurd and ridiculous. The consequence was, that the discrepancy gradually became so great between the necessary deductions of reason and the dogmas of popular faith, that the more intelligent not only rejected the commonly accepted opinions, but repudiated all religious convictions. Thus Paganism became a hindrance to religion instead of an aid. In this state of things the only use that was made of it was as an engine of state. The superstitious fears of men were used to keep them in order, and grave philosophers and official dignitaries were seen to bear a part in religious rites, which they secretly smiled at, and inwardly despised. Such a state of things could not long continue, and as mass after mass rose to an intellectual level which enabled them to see through the delusion, their religious ceremonies must just as fast have lost all reverence; and that which was once sacred must have become contemptible. The condition of things then had come precisely to this, that the more enlightened part of the heathen world must have a better religion or none at all. At that juncture the Almighty saw fit to interpose, and establish a religion in the world, which would satisfy the religious wants of man, and fill all his best conceptions in all stages of his advancement to the end of

time. "When the fulness of time was come, God sent forth his Son."

Those great and gifted men, whom God raised up as the agents in bringing about this vast advancement in the intellectual condition of the world, deserve the grateful commemoration of mankind. Though favored by no supernatural illumination, they made the best use of the light which was accorded to them, "they did what they could," and they accomplished much. I count it no irreverence to mention their names in this place consecrated to the teaching of the religion of Christ. I would not violate the reverence which all who cherish our common faith bear to the sacred and venerable name of Jesus, by exalting those men to a level with him, or by depressing him to an equality with them. To me, as I hope to you, the name of Jesus has a sacredness, which I feel for none except the Infinite Jehovah alone. He has been exalted by God to a dignity altogether unapproached. To me "there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved." These men stood up as the interpreters of Nature. To us Jesus is the only mediator between God and man. They were the teachers of human wisdom. In Jesus dwelt the Wisdom and Word of God. They dealt in dim and fallible probabilities. Jesus knew and demonstrated by miracle, that his doctrine was from God. They of their own wills established a few schools of philoso-

phy, and gathered about them a few disciples to be scattered at their death. Jesus was sent by God to be the Saviour of the world, to lay the foundation of a society which should never cease to exist; as he himself prophesied on making his first convert, "Thou art surnamed the Rock, and upon this rock will I build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." The words of those sages are proposed to the minds of men to be accepted or rejected as may seem to them good. The words of Jesus judge the nations, and decide the destiny of the human soul.

Anaxagoras, Thales, Pythagoras, Socrates, Plato, Xenophon, Aristotle, were the names of the principal luminaries, which rising upon the thick darkness of the heathen world, kept up a sort of star-light after the setting of the Hebrew prophets; and before the coming of the Sun of Righteousness. About the time of the return of the Jews from the Babylonish captivity, and during the lifetime of the last writers of the Old Testament, there appeared in Athens the most remarkable man of pagan antiquity. This was Socrates, whose name and character have become the heritage of all time. In him was exhibited such a wonderful combination of intellectual wisdom and moral excellence, such a purity of life combined with active benevolence, that he has been in subsequent times the admiration not only of the heathen, but the Chris-

tian world. And when we compare his life with that of the majority under the Gospel, we are forcibly reminded of the words of Christ, when he said: "Many shall come from the east and from the west, from the north and from the south, and sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven, and the children of the kingdom shall be cast out."

Socrates was the son of a statuary, left early in life on his own resources to support himself by the labor of his own hands. But he early discovered intellectual powers of the first order, and a thirst for knowledge which nothing could repress. Athens had already become the centre of learning and art, and almost every science had able teachers by whom the studious might be trained to usefulness and accomplishment. A wealthy citizen, discovering his ardent love of knowledge, became his patron, and by appointing him preceptor of his children, relieved him from the necessity of manual labor, and gave him an opportunity to complete his education under the best masters. He soon became the greatest mind of the city, and of the world. But what sanctified his great talents and acquirements, and made him such a blessing to the world, was the fact, that he cultivated his moral as well as his intellectual nature. In him that pride and selfishness, which are often excited by the possession of great talents and splendid acquisitions, found no place. His heart grew with his understand-

ing, his integrity he kept unstained, and when he arrived at that age when other men of his times were forming their schemes of private ambition, were devising measures of turning their advantages to the best account, of amassing wealth, of seizing on the offices and honors of their country, Socrates renounced every selfish pursuit, and devoted his noble powers to the office of the moral instruction and improvement of his fellow men. He saw, that what his countrymen wanted, was not so much intellectual cultivation as moral discipline. He saw that humanity in his times was receiving a disproportionate development. The mind grew gigantic, while the conscience and the heart became shrivelled and impotent. He saw that man with such an education becomes more intelligent only to become more mischievous and miserable. Declining those metaphysical investigations into the nature of things, which had almost exclusively occupied the studies of his predecessors, he directed his attention to moral and social duty. He bent the whole force of his mind to persuade mankind to lead a temperate, sober, just and religious life, to curb their fierce passions, and to bear their troubles with patience. "Whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report, if there be any virtue or any praise," these things he taught them to think upon,



and diligently to pursue. Though he was himself poor, he taught without money and without price. He was always in public; wherever he found listeners, there was to him an opportunity of doing good.

His own life was a pattern of every virtue which he taught. We have a picture of his life from two of his most worthy and illustrious disciples. One of them has left on record the following testimony. "The man," says Xenophon, "whose memoirs I have written, was so pious that he undertook nothing without asking counsel of the gods, so just, that he never did the smallest injury to any one, but rendered essential services to many; so temperate, that he never preferred pleasure to virtue, and so wise that he was able, even in the most difficult cases, without advice, to judge what was expedient. He was eminently qualified to assist others by his counsel, to penetrate into men's characters, to reprehend them for their vices, and to excite them to the practice of virtue. Having found all these excellencies in Socrates, I have ever esteemed him as the most virtuous and the happiest of men."

But strange as it may seem, this most eminent sage and philanthropist, so far from meeting the honor and the reward that he merited, received from his fellow-citizens the basest ingratitude. He was maliciously accused, and judicially murdered, in the very city to whose prosperity he had devoted his life. But over

such a man death had no power. It only shed a brighter lustre over a blameless and heroic life. He drank with calmness the fatal cup ; and heathen as he was, the cheerfulness and hope, which sustained him in his last hours, demonstrated the universality of that truth, which is so beautifully expressed in the deep spiritual philosophy of St. John. "Brethren, if our hearts condemn us not, then have we confidence towards God." "It would be inexcusable in me," said he, "to despise death, were I not persuaded that it will conduct me into the presence of the gods, who are the most righteous governors, and into the society of just and good men ; but I derive confidence from the hope, that something of man remains after death, and that the condition of good men will be much better than that of the bad."

The influence of the mind and character of Socrates has not faded out of the world to the present hour. One of his pupils, whose mind his great intellect did most to form, may be said to have dictated the religious and philosophical opinions of the civilized world for centuries, and to have essentially modified the doctrines of the Christian church. And another disciple of the same school reigned a sort of intellectual dictator for a thousand years.

Such were some of the instruments by which God poured light into the world in those intermediate ages between the close of the Old Testament and the

opening of the New. Such were the causes which disgusted the world with their old superstitions, and made Christ the desire of all nations, and when the Apostles went forth to summon them to a better faith, led them to abandon the impure worship of idol deities, and build temples on every shore to the only living and true God.

## Lecture III.

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### THE PERSIAN EMPIRE.

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MATTH. 28 : 19.—Go ye therefore and teach all nations.

SUCH was the commission of Christ to the Apostles just before he left the earth ; “ Go teach all nations.” It will be the purpose of this lecture to develop the circumstances in the state of the world, which made the fulfilment of this command possible, more so than ever before, and perhaps more so than it ever has been since. The two circumstances on which the practicability of this enterprise of teaching all nations depended, were the easy communication among all parts of the earth, and a common language all over the world, and moreover a time of peace, when the attention of mankind should not be engrossed in something else and so not at leisure to attend to the Gospel of salvation. This state of things was brought about by the almost universal diffusion of the Greek language, and the conquest of the world by the Roman arms. Another cause almost as essential, was the scattering of the Jews among all nations, for it was in their

synagogues that the Gospel was first preached. Their narrowness and bigotry made them nearly barren trees as to any fruit to the general good of the world. Yet on this barren stock was the Christian church engrafted, which soon bore fruit abundantly, and its fruit was for the healing of the nations. It was requisite that there should be one language generally diffused, for although the apostles might be miraculously assisted to preach in many languages, the time must at length come when some written memorial of their preaching must be all that would be left of them. It was of the highest advantage that the apostolic writings should be left in the Greek tongue, as its use was then extended from the deserts of Africa to the forests of northern Europe, from the Indies to the Straits of Gibraltar.

That this was the case, is evident from the New Testament itself. The Epistle to the Romans was written by Paul in Greek, though sent to Rome where the Latin was the vernacular tongue. Peter dates his first Epistle from Babylon, which is written in Greek. The Epistle of James is sent to the twelve tribes scattered abroad, that is, throughout the world, and it is written in Greek. Had no Jew ever known any thing but the Hebrew language, the Messiah would have come in vain. The Gospel could never have been preached to any but the Jews, and the Christian church would have perished as an ob-

scure sect of that religion. It was necessary that the Jews themselves should learn a new language, that which was most diffused, that the true religion might be infused into a new medium, and thus be spread from land to land. It was necessary that the precious medicine of life should be dissolved in an element which rolled on every shore, which flowed in every stream, that all men might taste thereof and be saved. It was necessary too, that a foreign language should be forced upon the Jews by conquest and constraint. Nothing short of this could have overcome their bitter prejudices. It will be the object of this lecture to show how this was brought about. The great designs of God were equally subserved by the misfortunes as the prosperity of the Jews, and his purpose of preparing the world for the advent of the Redeemer, was equally ripening by their means, whether they worshipped in Jerusalem in peace, or wept by the rivers of Babylon. Every where they diffused a knowledge of the true God. Every where they cherished the expectation of a Messiah, and when he came, they were the materials of a Christian church. They already possessed in almost every city of the Roman empire a part of the elements of Christian salvation. They already knew the only living and true God. It was only necessary for them to add the knowledge of Jesus Christ whom he had sent. And the sufferings of the Jews, like those of their

Messiah, have been made instrumental in the salvation of the world, like the incense of sacrifice, then most useful and precious, when perishing in the consuming flame.

The first great empire, to which Judea fell a prey, was the Babylonian. Jerusalem was finally destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar five hundred and fifty-seven years before Christ, and the remnant of the people were carried to Babylon and the neighboring countries, whither the main body had been removed eighteen years before. The glimpses of those countries and times are very short, both in sacred and profane history. But enough is left us to lead us to infer, that the residence of the Jews in the East was not without great and lasting effects. One person adorned that dark period of God's exiled church, who might redeem ages from obscurity; I mean the prophet Daniel. Almost the only sight we get of the mighty Babylon, is through his writings. He passes before us from youthful beauty to extreme age. We see him rising like Joseph by early wisdom, piety and integrity, from slavery to be the chief minister of state. And it is altogether probable that it was through him, that Cyrus was prompted to restore the Jews to the Holy Land. The edict was issued in the first year of his reign, immediately after the capture of Babylon, which Daniel had foretold by interpreting the writing on the wall. But the restoration

of the Jews, an event so wonderful and unique in the history of the world, though properly attributed to the providence of God, was brought about by means more circuitous than is generally supposed. Fifty or a hundred thousand Jews did not live in Babylonia, Media and Persia, seventy years for nothing. Such a singularly religious people could not fail to make a religious impression. And the Jews, among these oriental nations, appear to have been treated with much more respect than in the western world. The reason of this probably was, that the Persians, like the Arabians their neighbors, had not declined so far from the patriarchal religion, or sunk into such gross and degrading idolatry as those nations which had wandered farthest from the paternal hearth-stone of the human race.

It was in this period of the Jews' sojourn in the East, it is supposed, that the famous reformer Zoroaster, appeared. I look on him as bearing the same relation to Moses that Mahomet does to Christ. Both availing themselves of the light of a true revelation, attempted not to introduce the true religion, but to reform the religion of their country by introducing into it the most important principles of the true faith, and thus with a mixture of base and noble motives, to benefit their country and reflect glory on themselves. And the secret of the success of both was, that the theology which they derived from Moses and



Christ, was so simple, so sublime, and so consonant, at the same time, with the best conceptions of mankind, that it clothed these impostors with the veneration of their countrymen, and sanctified even their follies and their crimes.

From Moses, Zoroaster derived the idea of one spiritual God, the maker of heaven and earth. But he corrupted this pure doctrine by making two subordinate gods, the authors respectively of good and evil. From Moses he received an utter abhorrence to all images, and to temples in which they were worshipped. But he introduced in connexion with the true faith, the doctrine of evil spirits dividing the government of the universe. And so it happened that there was not only an action of the religion of the Jews upon that of the Persians, but a reaction of the Persian religion upon that of the Jews. The Jews, as would appear from the Book of Tobit, first learned in their captivity those ideas of the agency of evil spirits in the world, of which we find traces in the New Testament.

Cyrus was a Persian, and in all probability had been instructed in the doctrines of Zoroaster, a combination, as we have seen, of Judaism and the ancient Persian religion. Hence, I have no doubt, his extraordinary partiality for the Jews, and his zeal in rebuilding the only temple on earth which was dedicated, in his phrase, to "the God of heaven,"

and was free from the all pervading and all polluting sin of idol worship. But the influence of Zoroaster did not end here. The successors of Cyrus were educated in his religion. The priests and teachers of his religion were called Magi, and exerted a powerful influence in the state. Darius Hystaspes, son-in-law and successor of Cyrus, most warmly espoused the religion of the Persian philosopher: and when Zoroaster was slain by an irruption of the Scythians, he amply avenged his death, and rebuilt the fire temples which the Scythians had destroyed, especially the one in which Zoroaster ministered, with more splendor than ever. It was this enmity to idolatry, thus derived through Zoroaster from Moses, which was the only redeeming principle that the Persian monarchs carried with them in all their extensive conquests. Cambyses, the son of Cyrus, madman and tyrant as he was, derives a sort of dignity from his zeal against idolatry. His indignation at seeing the Egyptians worship a living brute does honor at least to his Persian education, though in other respects he was a cruel and detestable tyrant. When Darius and Xerxes marched their mighty armies into Europe, the only idea which these vast expeditions were intended to carry out, that can excite the least sympathy in the Christian, is the destruction of idolatry, which they every where threatened and attempted to realize. Thus it is that

mind governs at last. The Persian kings with their vast armies, bearing war and subjugation to remotest lands, were only realizing ideas which had been matured by Zoroaster in his cave, and which he in turn had derived from Moses through the exiled Jews. The hand is the mere executive of the brain. The sword is the servant of the pen. The soldier is the machine of the thinker; and armies are assembled and battles are fought to carry out a few ideas with which the men of letters have filled the mind of a nation, and scholars and sages, prophets and impostors, good men and bad men, kings and generals, armies and revolutions, are all equally used to accomplish the purposes of that Eternal Mind who sitteth supreme over all. The ambition of Cyrus and his successors, though in a manner which they did not anticipate, was the means made use of by God, of introducing among the enslaved and stagnant multitudes of the East, the civilization, the arts and the learning, which Greece with her wonderful genius had matured.

Cyrus, whose sudden irruption into Babylon broke off Belshazzar's feast, and fulfilled so terribly the writing on the wall, had already extended the Persian empire over a greater part of Asia Minor. Belshazzar, the last king of Babylon, attempted to strengthen himself against the growing power of the Persians by forming an alliance with Croesus, king of Lydia,

so famous for his riches. This monarch, puffed up by his great wealth, and the command of an army of neary half a million, resolved to encounter the Persian power but lately become formidable. To make assurance doubly sure, he sent to enquire of the oracle at Delphi in Greece, the result of his expedition. He obtained for answer, "If Croesus pass the Halys," the boundary between Lydia and Persia, "he shall destroy a great empire." He went, and found that empire was his own. He was defeated by Cyrus, and his whole kingdom came into the hands of the conqueror five hundred and forty-eight years before Christ. This conquest brought the Persians in collision with the Greeks, and was the cause of those wars, which were waged with such bitterness for generations between the two nations, and finally resulted in the destruction of the Persian monarchy. The Greeks, though natives of Europe, had planted many colonies on the Asiatic coast. These colonies, though infinitely superior to the effeminate and luxurious Asiatics in every physical, intellectual, and moral attribute, were altogether unable to resist the overwhelming weight of an empire which reached from Ethiopia to the Caspian sea, and from the Indus to the Bosphorus. They were obliged to submit like the rest, and pay an annual tribute to their conquerors, no less to the humiliation and annoyance of the mother country than themselves. The yoke at length became

so oppressive that they resolved to throw it off. To effect this, they applied to Athens and Sparta for aid. Receiving assistance from these most considerable states of Greece, they rebelled, marched to Sardis, took it, and accidentally set the city on fire, by which it was totally consumed. The loss of this city, the richest in Asia Minor, exasperated Darius, king of Persia, in the highest degree, and kindled in his breast such a flame of resentment that he resolved upon revenge. Lest in his multifarious affairs he should forget the offenders, he appointed an officer, whose duty it was each day to repeat to him as he dined, "Sir, remember the Athenians." Resolved to punish these presumptuous Republics, which had dared to brave the whole power of the Persian empire, he collected a fleet and army sufficient as he supposed, to crush so small a country at a blow. After an ineffectual attempt to reach Greece by the circuitous route of Thrace and Macedonia, a second armament was fitted out of the flower of that army which had borne conquest on their banners from the Euphrates to the Nile, and transported by sea directly towards the little Republic of Athens, able then to send into the field from ten to fifteen thousand men. The Athenians met and vanquished them on the plains of Marathon, leaving six thousand dead on the field.

Thus ended the first attempt of Persian despotism upon the liberties of Greece. This may be said to

be the first demonstration that was ever given to the world of the benefits of a free government. A few ages of absolute political liberty had trained up a race of men such as had never yet been seen. Intelligence, combined with physical force, thorough discipline and an enthusiastic love of country, for the first time were brought to contend, hand to hand, with the pampered sons of Eastern luxury, and the spiritless automata of a despotic government. The result was what\* it will ever be. The Orientals fell like grass before the swords of the free.

But this defeat, so far from discouraging the conqueror of the Indies, only roused him to mightier efforts. He immediately resolved on invading Greece with a larger army than before. But in the midst of his preparations he fell before the conqueror of all. He died, and left the inheritance of his kingdom and his revenge to his son Xerxes, who was destined still further to add to the glory of Greece.

Succeeding at an early age to the mightiest monarchy which the world had ever known, he was resolved to signalize his reign by extending still further the boundaries of his hereditary dominions. Asia was not enough to satisfy his boundless ambition. Europe must likewise be subjected to his power. His father's quarrel with the Greeks furnished him with a convenient apology for such enormous injustice. Four years were spent in collecting and fitting

out the most gigantic army that ever trod the earth. Xerxes then ruled over the most fruitful and populous regions of the globe, and the simple habits of life which then prevailed, enabled the earth to sustain some three or four times the number that can be supported in the more costly and luxurious mode which has since been adopted by all civilized nations. Every nation was called upon to furnish its quota of troops, or shipping, or provisions, from Ethiopia to the Caspian, from the Ægean to the Persian Gulf. Four full years were consumed in preparations for the descent of Asia on Europe, and all for what? To crush a nation, whose utmost extent did not exceed some of the States of this Union, and whose united forces could not exceed fifty thousand fighting men. At the end of four years an army was assembled amounting to the incredible number of three millions, collected from twenty-seven different nations. Among the rest the Jews are said to have contributed their part. To transport such a multitude by shipping from Asia to Europe, was not to be thought of. A bridge of boats was therefore constructed, connecting the two continents. Seven days and nights it took for the passage of this innumerable host, bearing, as they supposed, conquest and subjugation to the whole Western world.

The scene which occurred just before the passage of Xerxes into Europe, at the Straits of the Helles-

pont, where his land and naval forces were collected, all within sight of each other, I cannot better describe than in the simple language of the most ancient profane historian. "On their arrival at Abydos, Xerxes desired to take a survey of all his army: the inhabitants at his previous desire, had constructed for him on an eminence a seat of white marble; upon this he sat, and directing his eyes to the shore, beheld at one view his land and sea forces. When the king beheld all the Hellespont crowded with ships, and all the shore, with the plains of Abydos, covered with his troops, he at first congratulated himself as happy, but he afterwards burst into tears."

Let us place ourselves in imagination by his side, not like him to weep that not one of that mighty host should be living at the end of a hundred years, but to view, as it then was, the state of the world, and consider the momentous chances which hung upon the fate of that expedition. Supposing ourselves possessing the power to see from that elevation the distant as well as the future, we naturally turn our eyes to Greece, the devoted object of all his hostile army. There she lies with her beautiful islands, laved by the crystal waters of the *Ægean* sea. There is Athens with her exquisite arts, her literature, and her science, with her constellations of genius just ready to burst upon the world. There was Sparta, less cultivated, but the bulwark of Grecian independence. There



was Leonidas, with his three hundred. There in a little peninsula, lay the intellectual hope of the world, the sole germ of free government for ever and ever. Is this brave and gallant people to be crushed at a blow? Shall the Persian banners float on the hills of subjugated Greece? Is it to be announced at Susa that order reigns in Attica? Is Asiatic despotism to overwhelm in one long night of oppression the very dawn of European freedom and civilization? Worse than all, are the domestic institutions of the East to get established in the Western world, and polygamy, the nurse of despotism, that eternal bar to all social virtue and advancement, to supplant the primary institution of the Almighty, which decrees an equality between the sexes, and thus lays the foundation of private virtue, social prosperity, and public liberty? But Greece subjugated, where is the march of conquest to stop? She holds the key of Europe, and if she is overborne, and the millions of Asia rush in over her prostrate form, where is the inundation to be stayed? The luxuriant vegetation, the abounding rivers of Southern Europe are quite as likely to please the fancy of the luxurious Asiatics as their own more sterile and sultry plains? There were the larger islands of the Mediterranean, Sicily, Sardinia, and Corsica. What was to prevent the Persian fleet having mastered the only maritime power on the continent, from taking possession of these beautiful

abodes, with all their cities, and all their wealth? There was Italy too, equally inviting. She had already been enlightened by Grecian art and Grecian letters, but split up into little states, she was utterly incapable of resisting the force of the Persian arms. What was to prevent the Persians instead of the Romans from becoming the lords of Italy? And Italy subdued, what part of Europe would have been safe?

In that contest literature was to have an awful stake; the very existence of those men was suspended on the issue of this vast enterprise, whose works have been the study and delight of all succeeding time; that whole galaxy of genius, whose clustering radiance has since encircled the earth, nay, the very memory of this portentous phenomenon itself, Asia pouring out her millions on Europe, was at stake. Were it not for these very Greeks, Xerxes and all his host would have sunk in the night of ages, and not a whisper of his greatness and his pride would have come over the ocean of years that has since rolled on.

Religion too had her stake. Standing, as we imagine ourselves, on the borders of two continents, and casting our eyes Eastward and Westward and Northward and Southward, we see the world altogether given to idolatry. Every where is religion, every where are temples, every where is worship, but both priest and people, the learned and the simple, the noble and the base, all alike grope in Cimmerian

darkness as to the knowledge of the true Divinity. "The world in its wisdom knew not God." There is but one exception to this, the temple at Jerusalem. We turn our eyes eastward to Palestine, and there we see the temple of the true God just rising from the ruin of seventy years' desolation. Its builders, a feeble company, have just returned from a long captivity. The very language in which their holy oracles were written has become obsolete. Their speech is Chaldean, and their religious teachers are obliged from Sabbath to Sabbath to interpret from a dead language the records of their faith. This may answer for a narrow territory, and a small community. But the Light of the world is coming, and from that spot is to send forth his Apostles to teach all nations. How shall this be done, if the universal language do not visit and pervade the country whence is to emanate the universal religion? How shall the wisdom of God and the wisdom of man combined begin their sacred and triumphal march round the world? If Xerxes prevail, this can never happen. Forbid it then, Freedom; forbid it Intellect; forbid it Religion. "Arise, O God, and let thine enemies be scattered: and those that rise up against the liberties, the hopes, and the destinies of man, be as the chaff which the wind driveth away." Xerxes shall not prevail. The soil of Europe will not bear the tread of Asiatic despotism. Leonidas with his three hundred Spar-

tans at the pass of Thermopylæ, Themistocles with his ships at the Straits of Salamis, shall teach him that Europe has a nobler destiny than to repeat the dull formulas of Oriental society, and that human nature breathing the invigorating air of freedom, disciplined by science and animated by ardent and enlightened patriotism, grows up to a strength, a firmness, and a courage which hosts of slaves can never subdue, and by which the tenfold cord of oppression is rent asunder like the bands which bound the limbs of Samson. This army though raised by Xerxes, is under the command of the God of hosts. It shall not conquer. It shall teach the Greeks that they are the rightful masters of the world. It shall invite them to roll back the tide of conquest on Asia, and carry Grecian manners, arts, science, and language into the remotest East. They shall penetrate to the Holy Land. Into their language the Holy Oracles shall be translated. In their language shall be recorded the words of eternal life, and laden with the priceless treasure, that language shall come back to Europe, bearing light, and truth, and salvation, to nations and generations yet unborn.

## Lecture IV.

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### THE CONQUESTS OF ALEXANDER AND THE ROMANS.

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JOHN 12 : 20—23.—And there were certain Greeks among them that came up to worship at the feast. The same came therefore to Philip, who was of Bathsaida of Galilee, and desired him, saying : Sir, we would see Jesus. Philip cometh and telleth Andrew, and again Andrew and Philip tell Jesus. And Jesus answered them, saying : The hour is come that the Son of Man should be glorified.

WHAT the train of thought was in the mind of Jesus, which led to this reply, we are unable to determine. The most probable is, that the desire of these Greeks to see him, led his prophetic mind to anticipate the extension of his religion to the Gentile world. That was to be the consummation of his glory. The curiosity of these Greeks was a sort of fortaste of what was to come, when the whole world should turn to him with affectionate reverence, and that same Jesus, who was then an humble Galilean, the scorn and contempt of his people, and had not where to lay his head, should be hailed by distant nations as the Saviour of the world. Whatever other connexion there may have been in the mind of Christ between

these Greeks and his own glorification, we are unable to determine, but we can see through the medium of history that there was, by the providence of God, the closest connexion between the Greeks and Christ's glorification and the spread of his religion. Their arms, and their colonies, their intellectual and literary supremacy, had spread their language over almost the whole civilized world. In their language his Gospel was to be written, and thus through a medium, which their intellect had provided, the word of life was to be ministered to millions of minds. This diffusion of the Greek language took place by the means of conquest. That it entered into the plan of Divine Providence, we know from the fact that it made a subject of prophecy. In a vision of Daniel in the first year of Darius Hystaspes, it is written, "Behold, there shall stand up three kings in Persia, and the fourth shall be far richer than they all, and by his strength and through his riches, he shall stir up all against the realm of Grecia." Of this great attempt of Xerxes against Greece, I gave an account in the last lecture. After the retreat of Xerxes into Asia, there was no attempt of the Greeks to make reprisals for many years. Unfortunately they were divided among themselves, and exhausted their energies in mutual destruction. But the ages immediately succeeding the Persian invasion, were the most wonderful in intellectual development that the world has ever seen. More

great minds were produced within that century than in any other within the recorded history of our race. Providence seems to have kept back that wonderful nation until her intellectual treasure-house was full, and then to have sent her forth conquering and to conquer, not to destroy, but to fertilize the lands she overflowed; not to extinguish civilization by barbarism, but to carry intellectual light to those who were sitting in the regions of ignorance and darkness. Nothing occurred of great interest between the Persians and the Greeks for nearly eighty years. The Greeks went on to create the most beautiful literature and the profoundest philosophy that human genius has ever produced, and their mutual contentions perfected them in the science and practice of war. At that time a circumstance took place which gave them a greater practical proof of their superiority to the Persians than even their victories over Xerxes. Cyrus the younger was sent by his brother Artaxerxes to Asia Minor as the governor of the Western provinces. Here he became acquainted with the martial valor of the Greeks, and thought by means of them to march to Susa and dethrone his brother. For this purpose he collected an army of more than one hundred thousand, thirteen thousand of whom were Greeks, and advanced into the plains of the East. He was there met by his brother with an army of nine hundred thousand, defeated, and left

dead on the field. The thirteen thousand Greeks, now reduced to ten thousand, found themselves two thousand miles from the nearest Grecian city where they would be safe, without a day's provision, in the midst of an enemy's country. Undismayed by this most appalling condition, they commenced their retreat, cut their way through enemies in front, and guarded themselves from foes in their rear, over mountains covered with snow, through forests without inhabitants, and over rivers rapid and deep, and reached their homes in safety. This exploit filled the world with its fame, and perhaps more than any thing else, convinced the Greeks that few as they were, they held the destinies of Asia at their disposal. But confederated Republics, however efficient for defence, are generally ill calculated for conquest. It was not till more than forty years after this, when all Greece had been subjected to Philip, king of Macedonia, that the nation turned their eyes to the conquest of the East. He procured himself to be elected general in chief of all the Greeks for the prosecution of a war with their ancient enemies, the Persians. Just at the moment when the conqueror of Greece was meditating a descent upon the Persian empire, he fell by the hand of an assassin, leaving his kingdom to his son Alexander, a youth of twenty. This happened in the year three hundred and thirty-six before Christ, and it may be justly considered as



one of the great epochs of the world. A man was introduced upon the stage of action, who by his personal endowments, as conqueror and statesman, was, in a career of twelve years, to do more to effect the future condition of the world than any uninspired man that has ever lived. There are but too men who can be compared to him, Cæsar and Napoleon. Of these the first accomplished nothing for mankind, for civilization and letters, but the conquest of Gaul and a part of Britain. His final exploit was the destruction of the liberties of his country. The last left little behind him as the memorial of his career, but heaps of bones, and the earth fattened with the blood of the slain. But Alexander, in no respect better than his modern rivals, and animated by no better motive than personal ambition, was used as an instrument in the hand of God of lasting good to mankind. Endowed with an intellect of unusual power and comprehension, he received an accomplished education from one of the greatest minds that have ever lived. At the age of eighteen he began to mingle business with study, and became a soldier as well as a scholar. At the age of twenty, when summoned to assume the reins of empire, the sovereign in fact of the Greeks, he stood before the world a perfect representative of his nation. He combined their genius and learning with their valor and conduct, and entering Asia with the sword in one hand, and the poems

of Homer in the other, he came the armed missionary of Grecian learning, art, and civilization. Wherever he went Greece went with him. His conquests were not so much those of Macedonian arms as of Grecian letters. Wherever he went there went with him the genius of Homer, the sublime soul of Plato, and the practical wisdom of Socrates; and not only monarchies sprung up in his path, but schools of philosophy and academies of learning. Entering Asia with an army of thirty-five thousand men, in the space of twelve years he made himself master of the whole Persian empire, and of many nations which had never been subjected to the Persian yoke. He carried the Grecian language and manners to the Indus, and subjected to his power nearly as large a portion of the human race as now inhabit the whole of Europe. His first battle gave him Asia Minor; the second all of Syria to the Euphrates. Egypt, the whole valley of the Nile, surrendered without striking a blow. The third great battle on the banks of the Euphrates opened to him the whole extent of the Asiatic plains to the mountains which bounded the habitations of the Scythian tribes. Wherever he went the Greek language and literature took up their abode, and every city on this side the Euphrates in a few ages became the residence of Greek philosophers, poets, rhetoricians, grammarians, historians, till the whole circuitous shore of the Mediterranean became almost as

Grecian as Greece herself. Palestine of course came under his sway, and the influence of his career on the fortunes of the Jews was more decisive perhaps than upon any other people. It was his conquest alone which introduced the Greek language into the Holy Land, and so much do the most important events turn on the slightest causes, that on the chances of one life almost daily exposed to destruction by the dangers of war, depended the issue whether the records of the new dispensation should be committed to the world in the language in which they are now found.

It is related by Josephus, though his account is to be received with some caution, that when Alexander approached Jerusalem, Juddua, the high priest at that time, came out to meet him in solemn procession, and that Alexander was so struck by his appearance, that he not only spared the city, but granted the Jews many important privileges, giving as the reason of his conduct that he had seen the same person in a dream before he left Macedonia, who had assured him of the conquest of the Persian empire. From Syria Alexander passed on to Egypt, and his conquest of that country had a greater influence upon the future condition of the Jews than that of Judea itself. For on his return from Ethiopia he sailed down the Western, or Canopic branch of the Nile, and with the instinct of genius, fixed upon the site of a city between the lake Mareotis and the sea, which he called

after his own name. It rose immediately to be one of the most magnificent cities of the world, reigning as a sort of Queen of the East, as the mart of commerce and the seat of wealth and luxury for nearly eighteen hundred years, down to the very time when the discovery of the passage round the Cape of Good Hope opened to Europe an access by sea to the trade of the Indies. To people this new city, the Jews were invited among other nations, by the most liberal offers. A large colony in consequence was removed thither, where in a few years the emigrants lost in a great measure the knowledge both of the Hebrew and the Chaldee, and it became necessary for them to have their Scriptures translated into Greek, or lose all knowledge of their religion.

It is said, on very slender authority it is true, that the occasion of translating the Old Testament into Greek was the desire of Ptolemy Philadelphus to have a copy for the famous Alexandrian library, which was begun not long after the death of Alexander. However that might be, such a version we know was made, about two hundred and seventy-seven years before Christ, and thus opened the Jewish theology, hitherto shut up in an obsolete dialect, to the whole heathen world. We know moreover, that this was the translation made use of by Christ and his apostles, as almost all their quotations from the Old Testament are found in it nearly word for word.

Thus we have arrived at a most important era in the Providential preparation of the world for the advent of the Redeemer, the diffusion of the Greek language and literature through colonization in the West, and the conquests of Alexander in the East, from Spain to the Euphrates, the adoption of that language by the Jews themselves, and the translation into it of their sacred writings. That the Greek soon became the current language of Judea we may be sure from the Apocrypha, which is wholly written in that tongue. We have described the causes by which this state of things, so important to the spread of the Gospel, was brought about. The conquest of Grecian arms was transient, that of Grecian mind was substantial and enduring. The wide empire of Alexander was dissolved at his death, which happened at the age of thirty-two, his own dissipation and folly closing his career at that early period, before he had time to consolidate his conquests, or perpetuate in his own family his dominion. The consequence was, that his empire fell to his generals, divided, according to the language of prophecy, "to the four winds of heaven." They soon fell to quarrelling among themselves, and the whole history of their reigns, and those of their successors is but one tissue of wars and treasons, murders and crimes, till they were all swallowed up and lost in the Roman empire.

It now remains that I give some sketch of the rise of that power, of which we read so much in the New Testament, and which then enjoying the universal empire, by military force hushed the world into a profound peace at the advent of the Redeemer. While all these things were transacting in the East, a nation was rising into notice in the south of Italy, destined to exert a more extensive influence upon the world by her arms than Greece did by her literature and her arts. About seven hundred and fifty years before Christ, as tradition relates, a small band of refugees from the ruins of Troy, joined by an equal or greater number of other adventurers, established themselves upon the banks of the Tyber. Their government was at first monarchical. They were poor in resources, temperate and frugal in their habits, but either from choice or necessity warlike from the first. Italy was not then a new nor an uncultivated country. It must have contained states and cities of great wealth, as at this day there are discovered in that country vast receptacles for the dead, dating back much earlier than the time of Romulus, vieing in extent and splendor with the mighty catacombs of Egypt. The earliest notices of authentic history present them to us as a nation of soldiers and statesmen, trained from their earliest years to politics and war. Their monarchy lasted about two centuries and a half. While that continued there was little indication that the

Romans were to become the masters of the world. The establishment of a popular government however, rapidly developed their national characteristic, a love of conquest and military glory. This character once formed, and all honor and promotion coming from the people, none could hope to succeed without bending the whole force of his talents to that object which every citizen had most at heart, the honor of the Roman name and the extension of their dominion over foreign nations. The Senate, composed either of the most distinguished and influential of the citizens, or of those who had made their way through the regular grades of the magistracy to the highest which was known in the state, constituted a body, which for more than a thousand years for talent, for weight, for wisdom and experience, was unrivalled in the history of the world. The Roman from youth to age lived in the eye of his country. To gain the favor of the arbiters of his destiny, was his perpetual study and his constant endeavor. Thus from the first every faculty was put upon the utmost stretch, and nothing was omitted through the whole course of education, which could give him eloquence before the people, valor and conduct in the field, and wisdom in the Senate. The whole nation was a sort of military school. No man could be a candidate for office until he had served his country ten years as a soldier in the camp.

The result was, that by thus bending all the powers of human nature in one direction, they excelled all mankind in that art to which they were exclusively devoted; they became a nation of soldiers, and pursuing with steady aim and untiring perseverance, one exclusive object for eight centuries, they naturally became the conquerors of the world.

A Roman army was the most terrible object that ever trod the earth. It was a vast human machine, contrived for the subjugation of the world, instinct with intelligence, shielded from assault by an almost impenetrable armor, and animated with a courage which was then most at home when in the midst of the shock of battle. When we read of a Roman camp, we cease to wonder why that nation carried conquest from the sands of Africa to the borders of Scotland, from the Straits of Gibraltar to the skirts of the Arabian desert.

After the age of seventeen, every Roman citizen was liable to be enrolled and sent to the wars. When he arrived at the camp he entered on a course of life, in which ease and indulgence were altogether unknown. He commenced a discipline of hardship and endurance, which were it not made certain by historic records, would at this period of the world be utterly incredible. He was there furnished with a shield of sufficient size to protect his whole body, and thick



and strong enough to resist the force of arrows, swords, and spears; two javelins of some four feet in length, armed at the end with a three cornered blade of about eighteen inches. To these was added a two edged sword, sharp at the point, equally calculated to strike or to thrust as occasion might need. Boots for the defence of the legs, a breastplate of brass, a cap of the same, surmounted by a lofty plume, completed his panoply, and made him an object at once beautiful and terrible to the beholder. In addition to his heavy armor, the Roman soldier was compelled to march under the weight of the furniture of his tent, a burden which the puny men of our times would find themselves altogether unable to sustain. When they had arrived at the end of a fatiguing day's march, not an eye could be closed in sleep, nor a limb composed to rest, till their camp was surrounded by a trench twelve feet wide and twelve feet deep, surmounted by a breastwork of the same dimensions. When they were stationary, not a day nor an hour was lost. Their whole time was taken up in military and athletic exercises, which either gave strength and vigor to their bodies, or skill and dexterity to the use of their weapons. Such for nine centuries was a Roman army, not a day for the whole time that it did not exist and perform its various functions. The same discipline, continued from age to age, perpetuated without change the same national character, the same

taste and the same pursuits; and though the individuals changed, and the Roman consul, the Roman general, and the Roman soldier, bore a different name, it was the Roman consul, general, and soldier still. And such was the inflexible uniformity of military discipline from age to age, that though the form of government was three times radically changed, still, whether a Republic or a Despot, might govern at home, the Roman legions went steadily on in their stern and mighty task of conquering the world. Five hundred years were consumed in the conquest of Italy, and two hundred more made them masters of the earth. Sixty-three years before the birth of Christ the tide of conquest reached the Holy Land. Pompey the Great polluted with impious tread the Holy of Holies, and the Roman legions planted their standard upon the ramparts of the temple. Forty-eight years before the same era Cæsar subjugated the liberties of his country, putting an end to the Republic which had existed four hundred and sixty years. Thirty-one years before Christ the whole civilized world was united in one monarchy under his nephew Augustus. The civil wars were at an end, the Roman conquests were stayed, and the world was hushed in a profound repose, when the song was heard in Bethlehem, "Glory to God in the highest, peace on earth, and good will among men."

"No war nor battle's sound  
Was heard the world around,  
The idle spear and shield were high up hung;  
The hooked chariot stood  
Unstained with hostile blood;  
The trumpet spake not to the armed throng,  
But peaceful was the night,  
In which the Prince of light  
His reign of peace upon the earth began."

All nations being united under one government, the barriers which had always existed between them were broken down, and the traveller might pursue his way unmolested from the Euphrates to the Atlantic, from Ethiopia to the British Isles. Those legions, which had conquered the world, preserved its quiet, and kept watch on the borders of civilization, while the apostles went forth to fulfil the parting commission of their Master; "Go teach all nations," "Preach the Gospel to every creature." No circumstances can be conceived more favorable for the spread of a peaceful religion, than existed at the origin of Christianity. The very power which enslaved Judea, opened the world to be traversed by the disciples of Jesus, as the subjects of the same wide empire which had subjected all things to itself, and gave them the protection of its laws in regions which it would have been impossible for them a few ages before to have penetrated. Paul, the zealous mis-

sionary of Jesus to the heathen, though a native of Tarsus, was a citizen of Rome, and of the Roman empire; and shielded by this defence was safe as well against the malice of his own countrymen, as the riotous assaults he encountered in Asia Minor and Macedonia. Thus it was, that Grecian letters, and Roman arms, as well as the mission of Moses and the national existence of the Jews, bore a part in the Providential preparation of the world for the advent of the Redeemer. The wisdom of Roman statesmen was made quite as subservient to the great plan of Providence as the valor of the Roman commanders. They alone of all nations that have ever existed were able to retain and consolidate their conquests. Their polity, perfected by the experience of ages, greatly alleviated the burden of their yoke, and it has been often said, that after conquering the world like savages they governed it like sages. And if it is objected, "How could a just God permit so many millions of his creatures to come under a power so stern," the reply is ready, that they generally displaced a worse government than they created; and that such was the moral condition of the nations at that period, that a military despotism was the best government they would bear; and the power which put to death our Lord, tamed and civilized many barbarous tribes, and prepared them for the reception of his religion. The world was now ready

and waiting to receive its last great message from God. The predictions of the Hebrew prophets had spread through the world, the time was come for their fulfilment, and the expecting eyes of the nations were turned to Judea and the East. Virgil at Rome had caught the echo, and repeated in the language of his classic muse the glorious auguries of the sacred bards of Israel, and their united strains have been most happily imitated by a Poet of our own tongue ;

“ From Jesse’s root, behold a branch shall rise,  
Whose sacred flower with fragrance fills the skies ;  
The ethereal Spirit o’er its leaves shall move,  
And on its top descends the mystic Dove.  
Ye heavens from high the dewy nectar pour,  
And in soft silence shed the kindly shower,  
The sick, the weak, the healing plant shall aid,  
From storms a shelter and from heat a shade.  
The Saviour comes, by ancient bards foretold ;  
Hear him, ye deaf, and all ye blind behold.  
He from thick films shall purge the visual ray,  
And on the sightless eye-ball pour the day.  
’Tis he the obstructed paths of sound shall clear,  
And bid new music charm the unfolding ear.  
No sigh, no murmur, the wide world shall hear,  
From every face he wipes off every tear.  
In adamant chains shall death be bound,  
And hell’s grim tyrant feel the eternal wound.  
Rise crowned with light, imperial Salem rise  
Exalt thy towery head and lift thine eyes.  
See a long race thy spacious courts adorn,  
See future sons and daughters yet unborn

In crowding ranks on every side arise,  
Demanding life, impatient for the skies.  
See barbarous nations at thy gates attend,  
Walk in thy light and in thy temple bend.  
See thy bright altars thronged with prostrate kings  
And heaped with products of Sabea springs;  
See heaven its sparkling portals wide display,  
And break upon them in a flood of day!  
No more the rising sun shall gild the morn,  
Nor evening Cynthia fill her silver horn,  
But lost, dissolved in thy superior rays  
One tide of glory, one unclouded blaze  
O'erflow thy courts, the Light himself shall shine  
Revealed, and God's eternal day be thine."

## Lecture V.

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### THE PAGAN RELIGIONS.

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**ROMANS 1: 22, 23.**—Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image like unto corruptible man, and birds and four-footed beasts, and creeping things.

It is worth our while, before we proceed to the history of Christianity, to consider the religious condition of the world at the time of its introduction. It obtained immediately a wide extension; what were the religions which it supplanted? What changes did it introduce? What was the condition in which it found the morals of the world, and what improvement was consequent upon its promulgation?

Man is essentially a religious being. He is made so by the faculties of his mind, as well as the emotions of his heart. He is so both by his intellectual and his moral nature. One of the first and most spontaneous exercises of the reason of man is the investigation of causes and effects. And one of the first convictions, which are developed in the mind is, that there cannot be an effect without a cause. The next is, that the

nature of a cause must correspond with the nature of the effect, and can certainly be known by it. It is so in the works of man. When we see an exquisite painting it is impossible for us to doubt its having been the creation of intelligence. When Aristippus with his companions was cast on shore on an island apparently uninhabited, he wandered for a long time in despair. At last he came upon some mathematical diagrams traced in the sand. "Courage," said he, "my friends, I see the traces of men." Such is the necessary conviction of the human mind on looking at this universe; "Courage, my soul, I see the footsteps of a Deity." Men see in every thing the traces of power and wisdom. Nay, they know that they themselves are effects, the creatures of a superior Power. Atheism therefore has not prevailed much in the world. It has been quite as rare among the heathen as among those who have been favored with a divine revelation.

So much for abstract religious convictions. Men are led to God by their understandings alone. They are likewise led to him by their moral nature. On the first dawn of his faculties man experiences within him certain moral perceptions. "This is right, meritorious, honorable. That is wrong, base, despicable, worthy of punishment." This moral nature he finds exists not only in himself but in others; it is a universal attribute of humanity. It is not a fortuitous



endowment. It is given to man by his Creator as the law of his actions. It can come from no other source. But the moral power in man is only the faculty to see what is, distinctions which really exist. If we see them because they exist, then God sees them and they are realities, and he created both them and us. Our consciousness of the power to choose between the good and the evil, creates within us a sense of responsibility to the Being that made us.

Connected with this idea of God, or gods, which seems to be necessary and universal, is that of a Providence, an Intelligence, which not only made the world but governs it, which therefore knows the past, the present, and the future; and which of course observes not only all that is seen by mortal eyes, but likewise all that passes in the human mind. Men have perceived that the general course of events is, that vice should be punished and virtue rewarded, vice therefore is regarded by God with displeasure; and as he now punishes it so he will continue to do; a good man now and ever must be the subject of his approbation; and God being infinite in power, the good man will be forever rewarded. Such are the natural convictions of mankind, which result from the necessary operations of their moral and intellectual faculties. Such are the convictions which were expressed by the best minds of heathen antiquity—by Socrates, by Plato, by

Cicero, and all the poets with hardly an exception. Their works, as far as I am acquainted with them, all take for granted the existence of one supreme God, though admitting a multitude of inferior divinities. This is not only the last and highest conclusion of human intellect, but likewise the consenting voice of the most ancient traditions.

But then even in the best minds the subject was surrounded with great doubts and difficulties. God himself is an object of none of the senses. It is in vain therefore, for the human mind to form any idea of the mode of his existence. Not being then a matter of sense, or of demonstration, the wisest of men, though he might arrive at the truth, could not be sure that he had done so. Wanting certainty himself, he could not impart certainty to others, he could not propagate his doctrines with any confidence. The wisest of men therefore wanted that authority, which was requisite even for the propagation of the truth. They wanted certainty for themselves, and authority for others. Now certainty and authority are the very things which are necessary to make a religion powerful in the world. While religion therefore was in the hands of the philosophers, that is, the thinkers, it effected next to nothing in guiding and restraining mankind. It being merely a matter of opinion, that is of dim probability, one man felt that he had just as good a right to his opinion as another. One phi-

losopher differed from another, and thus weakened the authority of the opinions of both. A religion therefore, in the true sense of the word, that is, one that shall take hold of the faith and control the conduct of mankind, must have certainty and authority. Neither of these can be attained without inspiration and miracles. Had Moses himself received no divine aid, either from inspiration or miracle, even if he had uttered the same truths and laid down the same precepts, he would have accomplished nothing in the world. His doctrines would have rested for evidence on his own reason, and his precepts upon his own personal character and influence. Another man of equal wisdom and the same weight of character might have overthrown what he had built up. Besides, his manner would have been entirely different. No man can inspire confidence in others, who has not confidence in himself. No man in high religious matters can have full confidence in himself without conscious divine inspiration. It was reasonable therefore in him, when sent by God into Egypt to bring out his enslaved brethren, to demand miraculous credentials, and without them he could neither have brought them out, nor established among them the religion he was commissioned to teach. This distinction was perceived by the hearers of Jesus Christ, though the reason upon which it was founded was beyond their comprehension. They felt that "he taught them as one having

authority, and not as the scribes." The difference arose from the difference between certain knowledge and uncertain opinion. One is necessarily proposed with diffidence, the other with confidence, which no one uninspired can counterfeit.

Those who knew best about these things among the heathen, had no means of guiding the multitude. But then mankind must have a religion. The understanding demands it, and the heart craves it. It is not with the multitude as with the philosophers, a matter of quiet contemplation. They must act, as well as think and feel. The sentiments of the heart demand expression, and expression they will have through the actions of the hands, and through the words of the mouth. Occasions were continually occurring, demanding immediate action. Some public calamity bowed down the hearts of thousands, and seemed to indicate the wrath of superior powers. Those powers must be supplicated and appeased. Who shall contrive the rite? Not the wisest, but the man of the greatest boldness and readiness of invention. Once established, prescription took the place of reason, and habit consecrated that which was at first wanting in propriety.

Then again religion has much to do with the imagination. Every thing relating to God is invisible. There is nothing positively to determine and fix our ideas. But in pure spirituality our imaginations find no play,

nothing to lay hold of,—still it is impossible to keep them quiet, even in our most solemn devotions, and perhaps it has been found absolutely impossible for the most spiritual Christian altogether to separate the idea of corporeity from God. How much more impossible then must it have been for the uninstructed heathen! With the best intentions therefore, there must have been diversities, and great imperfections in heathen opinions and heathen worship. Such we find to have been the fact. Certain of the existence of a God, yet uncertain of the mode of his existence, it was natural that the human mind should run into a thousand vagaries and a thousand errors. It was natural that mankind should fancy that they had found God in those parts of the material universe where his attributes are most displayed. Hence the most ancient species of idolatry is said to have been that, which deified the heavenly bodies, the sun, and moon, and the host of heaven. The sun is perhaps the brightest emblem of God, except the human soul. To us he is in fact the mightiest instrument, as it were the right hand, of the benignity of the Most High. He riseth, and the shadows of night flee away. Joy and beauty go forth to meet him at his coming. At his call universal life riseth as it were from a universal grave. He draweth aside the curtains of darkness, and saith unto man, “Come forth.” He shineth, and the face of nature is glad.

He hideth his face and all things mourn. He withdraweth from the western sky, and darkness resumes her ancient dominion, and all things seem to wait his return. The soul itself, as it were, deprived of its support, gradually loses its energies, and sinks into a profound repose. What wonder then, that in the native ignorance of mankind of the true nature of the Divinity, the wise should have worshipped the sun as the fittest emblem of God, and the ignorant as God himself. Such was probably the idolatry of the nations from among whom Abraham was called to the worship of the true God. Such was probably the worship of the Chaldeans and Egyptians.

There is a very beautiful Eastern fable of Abraham, which though destitute of all historical probability, I cannot forbear to relate. It is said that "As Abraham was walking by night from the grotto where he was born to the city of Babylon, he gazed on the stars of heaven, and among them the planet Venus. Behold, said he, the God and Lord of the universe; but the star set and disappeared, and Abraham felt that the Lord of the universe could not be thus liable to change. Shortly after he saw the moon at the full; Lo! he cried, the Divine Creator, the manifest Deity! but the moon sunk below the horizon, and Abraham made the same reflection as at the setting of the evening star. All the rest of the night he passed in profound meditation; at sunrise he stood before

the gates of Babylon, and saw the whole people prostrate in adoration. Wondrous orb, he exclaimed, thou surely art the Creator and Ruler of all nature; but thou too hastest like the rest, to thy setting; neither then art thou my Creator, my Lord, or my God." How much more sublime as well as rational, the theology which he commenced, and the sentiments which were afterwards expressed by one of his greatest descendants, which make these glorious orbs only the manifestations of something far greater than they!

"The heavens declare the glory of God,  
And the firmament showeth his handy work."

Another source of corruption to the Pagan religions was the Priests. It seems the natural dictate of the religious nature in man to commit the management of religious concerns, and the performance of religious rites, to an order of men set apart for that purpose. They thus become better acquainted with them than others, and a sacredness by the power of association attaches to them, which renders their ministrations more satisfactory, and of course more profitable to those in whose behalf they perform sacred offices. A priesthood then, seems to be the law of nature, as far as any institution can be so considered. A priesthood, even under a divine dispensation, with written and express institutions, when nothing com-

paratively is left to their discretion, is a dangerous power. How much more so in a religion of human device, where every thing is left to the contrivance of man. Every heathen temple had its priests, who were immediately interested in securing for it the superstitious veneration of the worshippers. What pious frauds were resorted to we may imagine, when we learn that at the church which covers the sepulchre of our Saviour, a fraudulent miracle is performed every year, by which the multitude are made to believe that fire comes down from heaven to light the tapers of the faithful. Thus it was that the religious sentiment, itself honest and ardent, which at vast expense built lofty temples to express and cultivate its best aspirations, was at last cheated in its ignorance and blindness, by the very agents and ministers which it employed to preside over its sacred things.

Another source of corruption to religion was its connection with the government. The religious sentiment, being deeper and more powerful than any other, was soon seized upon and used by the government for its own purposes. It soon formed an alliance with the priesthood, and then all honesty in religious ministrations was at an end. Those in power always found means to make the oracle speak according to their wishes, and the victim at the altars was always found to have just such marks on his entrails as coincided with the purposes of the general



or the magistrate who consulted the will of the gods. More than all, no heathen religion made any provision for the religious or moral instruction of the people. The government and the priests found it more profitable for their purposes to use the religious sentiments of the multitude, darkened into superstition, than to purify and cultivate them, and then use them to ennoble and exalt their species. The philosophers, the only public teachers, considered themselves as having no mission to the multitude, and so they were left a prey to ignorance, superstition and oppression. Such then was the religious condition of the heathen world at the coming of Christ. It is unnecessary to say, that for all moral and spiritual purposes, the Pagan religions were utterly inefficient, and the world was deep sunken in vice as well as ignorance.

A traveller beginning at Egypt, and making a circuit of the Roman empire, would have found that country the lowest in the scale. There he would have seen the millions that inhabited the valley of the Nile paying Divine honors to a living ox, the stupid multitude believing, incredible as it may seem to us, that the Lord of the universe had become incarnate in the body of that dumb and unreasoning brute. If this ox should happen to die, he would see the whole nation in mourning till another was found having the same number and kind of spots on him with the dead animal, and then the mourning would give place to

universal joy that the supreme Divinity had found a new habitation. Cats and crocodiles occupied the places of inferior divinities, and shared the debasing homage of an ignorant people. While his heart would be filled with pity for the degradation of his species, he would feel no less regret, that the land which Joseph ruled, and which Moses owned as the place of his nativity should not have shared some rays of that religious light which she shed on the world through him. For as he journeyed up the Nile he would have encountered the noblest monument to the religious principle in man which the world anywhere affords. At Thebes he would have seen the most stupendous temple that the hands of man have ever raised. He would have approached, through an avenue bordered with colossal statues, of some miles in length, a temple a mile and a half in circuit, for one of whose columns our neighboring monument would have barely sufficed, still dedicated to other worship than that of the Most High.

Pursuing his way around the eastern shore of the Mediterranean, the next considerable city he would pass through would be Tyre, fallen indeed from her ancient greatness, but still opulent and beautiful. There he would have found the reigning deity to be Moloch, a disgusting idol, whose image is still seen on some ancient coins, a human body surmounted by a calf's head. It was at the feet of this statue that

Alexander when he captured the city found a beautiful Grecian Apollo in chains, the spoils of a military expedition into Sicily. In after times the memory of this idol was especially odious, as he was thought above all others to delight in human sacrifices. In the reign of Manasseh the worship of this idol was introduced into Jerusalem, and an altar erected to him in the valley at the south of the city, where it is said that children were sacrificed to him, which was called "passing through the fire to Moloch."

The next country he would traverse would be Syria, from time immemorial devoted to the worship of Baal, or the sun. He was worshipped with a magnificence second only to the temples of Egypt. Besides his temple in Babylon, where in the course of ages a vast treasure was accumulated, a temple was built to him on the very confines of the Holy Land, the ruins of which are still the astonishment and admiration of the traveller. The stones which composed its walls are so huge that it seems impossible to modern engineers that they should ever have been brought from the quarry and elevated so high; and an army is said to have encamped upon its roof. This idolatry often overspread the Holy Land, and in the days of Elijah the prophets of Baal were four hundred and fifty.

The next country we come to is Asia Minor, and the idolatry of this country we learn incidentally from

the Acts of the Apostles. In the fourteenth chapter we read, that when Paul and Barnabas were at Lystra, they healed a man who was lame in his feet. "And when the people saw what was done, they lifted up their voices, saying; The gods are come down to us in the likeness of men—and they called Barnabas, Jupiter, and Paul, Mercurius, because he was the chief speaker. Then the priest of Jupiter, which was before their city, brought oxen and garlands unto the gates, and would have done sacrifice with the people. Which, when the apostles heard, they rent their clothes, and ran in among the people, crying out; Sirs, why do ye these things? We also are men, of like passions with you, and preach unto you that ye should turn from these vanities unto the living God, who made heaven and earth, and sea, and all things that are therein. Who in times past suffered all nations to walk in their own ways. Nevertheless he left not himself without witness, in that he did good, and gave us rain from heaven, filling our hearts with food and gladness. And with these words scarce restrained they the people that they had not done sacrifice unto them."

In some places pride and interest, as well as superstition, kept the people bound to their idol deities. This was plainly the case at Ephesus, as we read further on in the Acts. The temple of Diana at that place was accounted one of the wonders of the world.

It was an object not only of veneration but curiosity. It had grown up into a trade to make silver models of it as an article of merchandise, to be sold in different parts of the earth. The silversmiths as well as the priests took alarm at the spread of the Gospel, as the almost comic account of the town meeting called by Demetrius and his fellow craftsmen evidently shows, and that most cogent argument addressed to the cupidity of his hearers. "Sirs, ye know that by this craft we have our wealth. Moreover, ye see and hear that not alone at Ephesus, but almost throughout all Asia, this Paul hath persuaded and turned away much people, saying, that they be no gods, which are made with hands. So that not only this our craft is in danger to be set at nought, but also that the temple of the great goddess Diana should be despised, and her magnificence should be destroyed, whom all Asia and the world worshippeth. And when they heard these things they were filled with wrath, and cried out, saying, Great is Diana of the Ephesians."

The religion of Greece was at all times most grossly idolatrous. Athens was full of statues, erected to imaginary deities, and deified men. Her superstition was not only bigoted but bloody. It was there that Socrates had suffered death, merely on suspicion of maintaining opinions subversive of the popular faith. Paul, to escape the same fate, was obliged to introduce the true God under the name of an unknown deity, to

which they had some where erected an altar. While they rejected all foreign religions and raised a most beautiful temple and statue to their patron goddess, Minerva, their religious faith did not take sufficient hold of their minds to have the slightest influence upon their moral conduct, and while they had the reputation of knowing best of all men what was right, they fell under the reproach of practising it the least.

The Corinthians were always a dissipated people. Their vast commerce gave them boundless wealth, and they imported the luxuries and the vices as well as the merchandise of all nations and all climes. Their sacred rites, so far from sanctifying their manners, only ministered occasions for intemperance and excess. And so gross were their conceptions, that the Eucharist itself had not been established long among the converts to Christianity, before it was perverted to a like occasion of riot and sensuality. Near to Corinth was the temple of Delphi, consecrated to Apollo, which for nearly a thousand years had cheated the world with its pretended oracles of futurity. It is hardly necessary to say that it was all one stupendous deception, contrived with consummate art to make gain of the superstition of mankind; in fact no more respectable, except in its gold and its treasures, than the hovel of any witch or fortune teller of modern times.

And what shall we say of imperial Rome herself?

She had a religion, nay, was eminently religious. Cicero, the most learned and virtuous man of that people, makes it his boast, "that while we are excelled by the Greeks in the arts, by the Carthaginians in policy, and the Gauls in bravery, we surpass all the world in common sense, and in the wise conviction, that all things are governed by a superintending Providence. Hence it is that we give laws to the world." But this great man, when he uttered this boast, belonged to the college of Augurs, who by divination from the flight of birds, or the entrails of sacrifices, might forbid the election of magistrates, and the march of armies; and he candidly confesses that no two augurs could look each other in the face without laughing.

Rome at the height of her power divided her worship among twelve gods of the highest class, besides a host of minor divinities. Each new emperor, when he died, went to swell the number, and not a few claimed that honor during their lives. It was the attempt of Caligula to place his statue in the temple at Jerusalem, which exasperated the Jews to an incurable resentment, and led them to prefer being overwhelmed in its ruins to seeing it desecrated by the worship of a tyrant. There was something, it is true, in a high degree imposing in the splendor and dignity of Jupiter Capitolinus, the Patron god of Rome. Enthroned within the majestic architecture

of the Capitol, the very gilding of which cost the revenue of nations, he looked down upon that city which was the mistress of the world. For seven hundred and fifty years he was supposed to have watched over the growing fortunes of the descendants of Romulus, and each new conquest seemed to increase his glory and add to his greatness. Under his protection were supposed to go forth those invincible legions, which planted his own victorious eagle upon every city and fortress from the Atlantic to the Indies. At his feet were laid the spoils which were gathered from the precious things of all nations, and on him was fixed the reverence of the countless millions who owned the sway of the Cæsars.

But it is needless to add, that this splendid idolatry, though sustained by boundless wealth, and dignified with the most commanding magnificence, though countenanced by statesmen and philosophers, generals and patriots, utterly failed of all moral and spiritual power. The grossest corruption of principles and manners pervaded every class of society from the emperor to the slave. The Jupiter of the Romans saw nothing immoral in the universal robbery of mankind, nothing inhuman in training human beings like wild beasts, to shed each other's blood in the amphitheatres, nothing cruel in dragging a brave and generous enemy in triumphal procession, chained to the chariot wheels of the conqueror. To his proud



temple, O! how mysterious are the ways of Providence! were borne in captivity and humiliation the sacred utensils of the worship of the Most High. The ark, the golden candlestick, the table of the shewbread, were heaped among the common spoils of barbarous and heathen lands.

But when all this grandeur was at its height, a babe was born at Bethlehem, who, without the aid of armies was to turn again the captivity of the people of God; before whose growing greatness the splendid idolatry of Rome was to fade away like a vision of the night; and whose followers, after having planted his standard upon the site of the Capitol, were to raise an edifice in that very city to the worship of the true God, at the side of which that lofty pile would dwindle into the insignificant proportions of some private mansion of unambitious opulence.

## Lecture VI.

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### THE RELIGION OF THE JEWS.

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LUKE 16: 16.—The law and the prophets were until John. Since that the kingdom of God is preached, and every man presseth into it.

THE end of all religion as a positive institution, is to enlighten the understanding and cultivate the devotional sentiments. It is either to instruct, or to quicken. Each generation comes into the world with capacities merely, both of mind and heart, for religion. They need religious education, and religious education they will have, and if the truth is withheld, error and superstition will take its place. The mind must think, and the heart must worship. So it must be through life. The cares of the world are continually effacing religious impressions, and truths once clearly seen and vividly felt, by lapse of time wax dim, and lose the influence of present realities. The soul moreover feels the want of the support and guidance of religion at all times. Every day the soul experiences the need of communion with God. It is as necessary

to us as daily food. That we adored and acknowledged the Author of our being with the rising sun of yesterday, diminishes neither the need nor the pleasure of calling upon him to-day when the morning wakens us to a new consciousness of being; and the fact that we committed ourselves to our Almighty Guardian, when about to sink into the unconsciousness of slumber, when the shadows of the last night enveloped the earth, will not at all weaken the constraint which will impel us again to commend our souls to Him when sleep shall once more be about to imprison all our faculties. All religions therefore, have their sacred rites, by which God speaks to the heart, and the heart speaks to God. All religions have some modes of addressing the mind and moving the affections; of taking hold of the memory, and perpetuating themselves in the world.

But these outward institutions must all be adapted to the present condition of man. Religion can use only those instruments which are already in existence. In the absence of writing, it can use only ceremonies and forms, which have a conventional meaning, and thus come to be symbolic of certain truths. Thus the patriarchal religion consisted almost entirely of prayer and sacrifice. The Mosaic religion, which came after the invention of writing, added to prayer and sacrifice a written code of duty, a formal declaration of truths and principles, which lay at the

foundation of the whole institute. The patriarchal element was still strong and predominant in the Hebrew Commonwealth. There was no express provision made for public religious instruction. This was especially enjoined upon the heads of families. "And these words which I command thee this day shall be in thine heart, and thou shalt teach them diligently to thy children, and thou shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up." Indeed, such was the scarcity and costliness of books, that it was impossible for the great mass of the people to possess a copy of the law. For this cause we may suppose that it was added: "And thou shalt bind them for a sign upon thine hand, and they shall be as frontlets between thine eyes, and thou shalt write them upon the posts of thy house, and upon thy gates." It was with reference to the scarcity of books and means of instruction we may suppose, that Moses commanded the Israelites to write their laws upon their public altars, that they might thus unite devotion and instruction. "And it shall be on the day when ye shall pass over Jordan unto the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee, that thou shalt set there up great stones and plaster them with plaster, and then shalt write upon the stones all the words of this law very plainly." Thus, those who were unable to procure a copy of the law, might at least

become acquainted with its general provisions when they came to sacrifice.

The public religious instruction of the nation, such as it was, devolved upon the Levites. We have in the same chapter of Deuteronomy a stated homily which they were commanded to rehearse in the ears of all the people. I doubt if there be any more impressive preaching even at the present day. The people were to be assembled in two companies, on two mountains over against each other, six tribes on one side and six on the other, one to pronounce the blessings and the other the cursings of the law, "And the Levites shall speak and say to all the men of Israel with a loud voice, Cursed be the man that maketh any graven image, an abomination to the Lord, the work of the hands of the craftsman, and putteth it in a secret place, and all the people shall say, Amen. Cursed be he that setteth light by his father or his mother : and all the people shall say, Amen." Thus they went through the principal points of their law.

There were no public assemblies for religious instruction. The only religious meetings we read of were the three annual festivals, which were celebrated wherever the ark happened to be, and the local sacrifices generally kept at the new moon on tops of hills, denominated in the Old Testament, high places. These were places set apart for religious exercises, especially for prayer ; and hence

called *Proseuchac* or oratories, after the Greek became the current language. Into one of these devoted and solitary places, it is supposed it was that our Saviour retired on the night previous to the choice of his disciples.

But in the Hebrew Commonwealth, church and state were closely amalgamated, the code of Moses, prescribing alike religious and civil duty. The Levites of course, were the judges and magistrates as well as the religious teachers of the people. That there were neither any provisions for the religious instruction of the people, nor many books among them, we should infer from the history of the times of Jehoshaphat. In the third year of his reign he sent some of his princes, and with them he sent Levites to teach in the cities of Judah. "And they taught in Judah, and had the book of the law of the Lord with them, and went throughout all the cities of Judah and taught the people."

But in the sacred institutions of the Jews it is evident that devotion predominated over instruction, the cultivation of the heart was made a more prominent object than that of the understanding. It was so in their temple service. Their tabernacle in the wilderness, and afterwards in the Holy Land, was intended as a perpetual memorial of God, and a symbol of his presence. It called the people off from idolatry, and reminded them that their worship was

to be directed to Jehovah alone. Its services, and those afterwards of the temple were perpetual, renewed every morning and every evening, that no pious Israelite should ever feel that the duties of adoration and gratitude could be omitted for a single day. The morning and evening sacrifice, we have every reason to believe, were to the religiously disposed an essential aid to devotion through the many centuries of the continuance of that imposing rite.

As no better occasion will probably present itself, I shall here give some account of the Jewish temple and its sacred rites. The temple of the Jews, the rallying point of their political existence, the consecrated seat of their religion, and the heart of their national affections, was built by Solomon one thousand years before the Christian era. It was placed on Mount Moriah in the south-eastern part of Jerusalem. On the east it was bordered by a deep valley called the Valley of Jehoshaphat, separating it from the Mount of Olives. If any one should attempt to form an idea of the temple from our modern churches he would be grossly deceived. Its purposes were different. The difference corresponds in some measure with the difference of the two dispensations. Christ said of the Old Temple, "It is written, My house shall be called of all nations the house of prayer." But to his own disciples he said, "Go teach all nations." Modern churches are constructed

with reference to teaching as well as worship, the temple at Jerusalem for worship alone. There were no accommodations for the assembly to sit down, it was even unlawful for them to do so. It was simply a place for a national worship. It consisted of four enclosures, one within another on three sides, but having a common wall on the fourth. Only one of these was covered with a roof in our modern sense of the term, and that was the last or innermost enclosure, the Holy of Holies, containing the ark, the cherubim, and the mercy seat. The outer enclosure, into which all nations were permitted to enter, contained an area in the first temple of more than fourteen acres. The second was the court of the women, not because none but women were permitted to enter it, but because they were permitted to go no further. Within this was the court of Israel, which again surrounded on three sides that of the priests, where was the great altar upon which the daily sacrifice was offered morning and evening. The great idea and design of the whole, was embodied in that simple sentence quoted by our Saviour: "My house shall be called of all nations the house of prayer." It was the primitive idea of worship by prayer and sacrifice, enlarged and nationalized. It was built to accommodate a nation assembled at their annual festivals, in which all the males were bound by a fundamental law to present themselves before God, and at



all other times such inhabitants of Jerusalem or the whole country as should choose to go to the temple to worship or sacrifice. Hence it is that we so often read in the New Testament of men going up into the temple to pray, or at the hour of prayer. They made it a point to be there at the offering of the morning or evening sacrifice, feeling as we may suppose, their devotion quickened and assisted by the thought of a national worship, and the consciousness of the sympathy of thousands lifting up their hearts at the same moment to Him who heareth prayer. These different courts and degrees of approach to the sanctuary, add beauty to that most exquisite parable of Publican and Pharisee: "Two men went up into the temple to pray, the one a Pharisee and the other a Publican. And the Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself,—God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men, extortioners, unjust, or even as this Publican. I fast twice in the week, I give tythes of all that I possess. And the Publican standing afar off would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner. I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other."

There must have been something exceedingly grand and imposing in the Jewish national worship—a whole nation assembled in one temple, itself a mag-

nificent structure, and adoring the Almighty at once, while the smoke of their common sacrifice ascended to heaven ! Besides the priests, there were employed in the temple service a great company of singers, accompanied by all kinds of musical instruments then in use. For this service most of the Psalms were written, those sublime and glorious compositions, which have stood for ages unapproached in the literature of the world, which combining in a wonderful manner the purest and most exalted devotional sentiments, with the most forcible inculcation of truth and duty, afford the most life giving food for the mind and heart, and are surpassed only by the words of him who spake as never man spake.

“ O come let us sing unto the Lord ;  
Let us make a joyful noise unto the Rock of our salvation.  
Let us come into his presence with thanksgiving,  
And make a joyful noise unto him with psalms ;  
For the Lord is a great God,  
And a great King above all Gods.  
In his hand are the deep places of the earth,  
And the strength of the hills is his also.  
The sea is his, and he made it,  
And his hands have formed the dry land.  
O come let us worship and bow down ;  
Let us kneel before the Lord our Maker,  
For he is our God,  
And we are the people of his pasture,  
And the sheep of his hand.”

**“ Who shall ascend the hill of the Lord,  
And who shall stand in his holy place.  
He that hath clean hands and a pure heart,  
He that hath not lifted up his soul unto vanity,  
Nor sworn deceitfully.  
He that walketh uprightly, and worketh righteousness,  
And speaketh the truth in his heart,  
He shall obtain the blessing of the Lord,  
And righteousness from the God of his salvation.”**

During the burning of the sacrifice, that most beautiful benediction of Moses was pronounced upon the whole congregation: “The Lord bless thee and keep thee, The Lord make his face to shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee. The Lord lift up his countenance upon thee and give thee peace.”

The religion of the Jews, and especially their temple worship, made an indelible impression on their minds, and took a hold upon their affections, which has never been exhibited in any other people. Religion and patriotism, two of the strongest passions of the human breast, united to bind the heart of the Jew to the city and temple where his fathers had worshipped. Its very soil to him was holy ground, and to rescue it from pollution his blood was ever ready to flow. Wherever he was upon the face of the habitable globe, he yearly sent to Jerusalem a contribution for the maintenance of its sacred services. Wherever he might be, the sacred city and temple were uppermost in his thoughts; and in the

desert or the city, his hour of prayer was the hour when the morning or evening sacrifice was offered up at Jerusalem. And to this day pilgrims of that afflicted and scattered nation come on their final journey to lay their bones in that consecrated soil, where repose the ashes of Abraham, and Isaac and Jacob.

The first temple built by Solomon continued in its glory only thirty-seven years, when it was plundered by Shishak, king of Egypt. It afterwards underwent a variety of fortune under the different reigns of the kings of Judah, till at last it was taken and robbed of all its precious things by Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, five hundred and eighty-eight years before Christ. It continued in a state of absolute desolation for fifty-two years, when the foundations of a new one were laid by Zorobabel, the lineal heir of the throne of David, at the command of Cyrus, king of Persia. This temple stood until seventeen years before the Christian era, when Herod the Great enlarged its size, and rebuilt it with a splendor and expense which far surpassed either of its predecessors. In this temple, though still unfinished, the infant Jesus was presented to God by his parents as their first born son, according to the provisions of the law. In this temple he appeared in the capacity of the Messiah, and delivered many of those immortal discourses which have gladdened and strengthened millions of hearts from that day to this. It was finally

destroyed by Titus, seventy years after the birth of Christ, and now its site is occupied by a Mahomedan mosque, and no Jew or Christian is permitted to come within its precincts.

I turn now from the temple to the synagogue. Though the provisions under the first temple for worship may seem to us ample, those for religious instruction, compared with our present usages, must appear deficient. There is a tradition that this was the opinion of the Jews themselves after their return from the Babylonish captivity. It is said, that during their exile, they were led to reflect on the causes of their awful apostacy from Jehovah. And among them occurred as one of the most prominent, the ignorance into which they had fallen of the laws of Moses, and the fundamental principles of their religion. After their return they attempted to remedy the evil by building synagogues, or places of assembly, in every town and village throughout the country.

A more probable account of the matter to my mind is, that after their return from Chaldea the difficulties of imparting religious instruction were greatly increased, and roused them to new efforts. The Hebrew had become a dead language, and of course inaccessible to the mass of the people, except by an interpreter. They could no longer read their Scriptures at home, and when they pleased. The office of religious instructor could no longer be performed by

the Levite as such, but he was obliged to add to his other qualifications, the accomplishments of a scholar, and be able to read the Hebrew and interpret it into the Chaldee. This might be done for a while in families. But the natural course of things would be for many families to assemble on the Sabbath, and listen while one interpreted. When the assembly grew beyond the dimensions of a house, a special building for that purpose would be the most natural resort. Thus originated the synagogue. How they sprung up may be readily suggested by what is recorded to have taken place immediately after the return of the Jews, and their re-establishment in Jerusalem under Ezra and Nehemiah. In the eighth chapter of the book of Nehemiah we read, that on a certain day at the feast of trumpets, in the year four hundred and forty-four before Christ, the people being assembled at Jerusalem, desired to hear their law. "And all the people gathered themselves together as one man into the street that was before the water gate: and they spake unto Ezra the Scribe, to bring the book of the law of Moses, which the Lord had commanded Israel. And Ezra brought the book of the law before the congregation, and he read therein before the street that was before the water gate from the morning until mid-day, before the men and the women and those that could understand, and the ears of all the people were attentive unto the book of the

law. And Ezra the Scribe stood upon a pulpit of wood, which they had made for the purpose." At his side stood thirteen of the principal elders of the nation whose names are given. "And Ezra opened the book in the sight of all the people, for he was above all the people, and when he had opened it all the people stood up. And Ezra blessed the Lord, the great God, and all the people answered, Amen, Amen, with lifting up their hands, and they bowed their heads and worshipped the Lord with their faces to the ground." Then thirteen of the Levites whose names are also given, "caused the people to understand the law, and gave the sense," that is, interpreted it from Hebrew into Chaldee.

Then and there, in a street of Jerusalem, growing out of the circumstances, nay, the difficulties of the time, was born the great instrument of the spiritual regeneration of the world, the invention of preaching, an institution which has done more to change the face of the world, and to elevate the level of society above any thing which was known in ancient times, than any thing else that can be named. "For after that in the wisdom of God, the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe." The synagogue was modelled upon the assembly of Ezra, the Christian church was copied in a great measure after the forms of the synagogue, and the very pulpit

in which I now stand is a lineal descendant of the one which they built for Ezra two thousand two hundred and eighty-five years ago in the street of Jerusalem.

From the time of Ezra synagogues began to be established throughout the land wherever the population was sufficiently dense to compose an audience. The principal things about the synagogue were the seats for the congregation, corresponding to the assembly in the street of which we have just read, the reading desk corresponding to the pulpit of Ezra, the seats behind the pulpit for the elders, corresponding to those thirteen who stood beside Ezra when he read. There was still further back, an ark in which the sacred oracles were kept, from which the book of the law was brought to the desk by a special officer with great reverence and ceremony. The original Hebrew still continued to be read, though a dead language. Some one therefore must have interpreted to the congregation, corresponding to those thirteen Levites, "who gave the sense, and made the people to understand the law" under Ezra. This interpretation, or giving the sense, gradually enlarged itself into preaching. The Books of Moses were divided into as many portions as there were weeks in the year, as likewise the prophets after the times of the Maccabees. The texts of our modern preachers are nothing more nor less than the remnants of this



practice. This preaching, or giving the sense, in the process of time, came to be greatly abused, and it was thought allowable to make the Scriptures mean not only what they were obviously intended to signify, but every possible sense was put upon them which human ingenuity could devise. Thus the original text became obscured instead of elucidated by their expositions; and so, according to the complaint of our Saviour, they made the word of God of none effect by their traditions. And it must be confessed, that modern preaching has gone very much the same way. Creeds and catechisms have taken the place of the traditions of the elders, and we go into the house of God and hear a passage of Scripture introduced, not to be explained according to its original meaning and connexion, but to be made the apology for the introduction of all sorts of human conceits and inventions; or if interpreted at all, it is made to square with the dogmas of some doctor or council, that has undertaken to interpose between God's word and the soul of man, which He has made amenable to himself alone.

The services of the synagogue consisted in prayers, singing, reading the law and the prophets, interpreting them to the people, and preaching. They commenced and closed with a prayer, which in some of its expressions closely resembles the form which was left us by the Saviour. "Hallowed be his great

name in the world, which he hath created according to his good pleasure, and may his kingdom be established. May we behold his redemption spring up and flourish. May his Messiah suddenly appear in our days, and in the days of all the house of Israel to deliver his people."

In singing they made especial use of the eighty-fourth psalm.

"How amiable are thy tabernacles, O Lord of hosts ;  
My soul longeth, yea, even fainteth for the courts of the Lord ;  
My heart and my flesh crieth for the living God."

Some of the prayers which were used in that service breathe the true spirit of devotion, and are clothed in language which bears a near resemblance to the Psalms in beauty and sublimity. Take for instance, the first of the nineteen: "Blessed be thou, O Lord our God, the God of our fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, the God of Jacob, the great God, powerful and tremendous, the high God, bountifully dispensing benefits ; the Creator and Possessor of the Universe, who rememberest the good deeds of our fathers, and in thy love sendest a Redeemer to those who are descended from them, for thy name's sake, O King, our Helper, our Saviour, and our Shield."

Such is a mere outline of the institution and services of the synagogue, and let it suffice to say, that

they were so wisely contrived as to answer the end for which they were designed. They supplied the deficiencies of the temple service. They enlightened the mind, as well as cultivated the devotional sentiments. They kept alive a knowledge of the oracles of God, and effectually cured all tendency to idolatry, and through all the bloody reigns of the successors of Alexander, and the military despotism of the Romans, kept them loyal to their invisible Sovereign, who had separated them from all the nations of the earth.

The synagogue was the cradle of Christianity. The Christian church was borne in its infancy upon the bosom of the Jewish. It was in the synagogues of Judea that the Gospel was first preached by Christ himself. It was in the synagogue of his native village that after reading, he appropriated to himself that beautiful passage of Isaiah: "The spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captive, the opening of the prison to them that are bound, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord," thereby claiming to be that great prophet that was to come into the world. And when, after his ascension, the apostles were sent forth to teach all nations, they found a place to commence their labors in every considerable city of the Roman empire.

They entered the Jewish synagogue, heretofore devoted to the posterity of Abraham alone; they abolished its sectarian and peculiar rites, set wide open its doors to the nations, appropriated all that was valuable in its ministrations, and in a few centuries enthroned the God of Abraham in the reverence of the Roman world. To the temple and the synagogue then, the offspring of Jewish piety and wisdom, are we indebted for the model of our Christian institutions, which have moulded all modern civilization, and have been the chief means of realizing God's ancient promise to Abraham, "that in his seed all nations of the earth should be blessed." To these England, our mother country, owes her moral and physical supremacy in the world. On the preservation of these institutions rests every hope which we can cherish for the happiness, the prosperity, and even the existence of our own country. And if the time shall ever come when the Sabbath shall be desecrated, and the voice of prayer and instruction no longer heard in the sanctuary, then may we be sure that the sun of our prosperity is about to set in blood, and the day of our destruction draweth nigh.

## Lecture VII.

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### JEWISH SECTS.

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JOHN 4: 9.—Then saith the woman of Samaria unto him, How is it that thou being a Jew, askest drink of me, who am a woman of Samaria? For the Jews have no dealings with the Samaritans.

A JEW, at the time of Christ, would not have thought himself complimented to have heard the Samaritans reckoned among Jewish sects, and perhaps, in strictness, they cannot be considered as such. But as many of them were originally of Jewish extraction, and received the laws of Moses as their fundamental constitution, lived in the very centre of Palestine, and are often introduced in the New Testament, a history of Christianity would be imperfect which should neglect to give some account of them.

The reign of Solomon, though so glorious to himself and so advantageous to his nation, sowed the seeds of disunion and dissolution in his kingdom. The temple, and the vast public works which he completed, could not have been constructed without heavy taxation. That was borne, during his reign, with patience

from the sentiments of pride and patriotism. But as soon as he was dead, and a son of inferior gifts and splendor, sat upon his throne, the people grew restive under the yoke, and demanded some abatement in the public burdens. The haughty answer they received from the young king, alienated their affections, and inflamed their resentment. Ten tribes revolted, and chose for their king, Jeroboam, a man alike destitute of piety and principle. To draw off the ten tribes more effectually from the house of David, he undertook to change their religion, and prevent their going up to Jerusalem, at their annual festivals. So he made two golden calves, one of which he set up at Bethel, about twelve miles from Jerusalem, on the border of his kingdom toward the South, and the other at Dan, on the northern extremity of his dominions, and said to his subjects: "It is too much for you to go up to Jerusalem. Behold, thy gods which brought thee out of the land of Egypt." He also ordained a feast in opposition to the festivals at Jerusalem. Seduced by such an example in high places, the ten tribes soon forsook the true God, and verged rapidly to ruin. What was wanting in the depravity of Jeroboam, seems fully to have been made up by Ahab, some generations after, for he married Jezebel, the daughter of Ethbaal, king of Sidon, introducing with her the worst species of idolatry. The kingdom of Israel was set up nine hundred and ninety years before Christ, and continued

only two hundred and fifty-four. By that time the knowledge of the true God was nearly lost among them, and they were carried away by Shalmanezzer, king of Assyria, beyond the Euphrates, never more to return.

As it often happened in ancient times, the conqueror settled the country which had been possessed by the ten tribes with colonies of his own subjects from Babylon and Cutha, and other countries. When they arrived there they found the country infested by lions, which had overrun it in its desolation. Imagining in their heathenish superstition, that it was because they did not know how to worship the God of the country, they sent to the king of Assyria for one of the priests, whom he had taken captive, to teach them in their Pagan phrase, "the manner of the god of the land," and he returned to them one of the priests who took up his residence in Bethel, and taught them the worship of the true God. But all he ever effected was to make them worship the true God in conjunction with other gods. The kingdom of Judah and Benjamin continued after that of Israel was destroyed, one hundred and thirty-eight years, when they too were carried into captivity to Babylon.

We hear nothing more of the successors of the ten tribes, till the return of the Jews and the rebuilding of the temple, by Zorobabel and his companions.

When they were building the temple, the descendants of these emigrants from beyond the Euphrates, who occupied the territory of the ten tribes, having been partially instructed in the Jewish religion, sent to them an offer to join with them in the work. "Let us build with you," said they, "for we seek your God as ye do: and we do sacrifice to him since the days of Esarhaddon king of Assur, which brought us up hitherto." This offer was rejected, as an impartial judge of the present times would say, in terms by no means courteous or conciliating. "Ye have nothing to do with us to build an house unto our God; but we ourselves together, will build unto the Lord God of Israel, as king Cyrus, the king of Persia, hath commanded us." Here then was the first offence between the Jews and Samaritans, as they were afterwards called from Samaria the ancient capital of the country, which aggravated by repeated ill offices, ripened at last into the most deadly hostility. Rejected and insulted by the Jews, the Samaritans began to obstruct their undertaking. They wrote slanderous letters to the court of Persia, and finally caused the enterprise for a while to be broken off. A few years afterwards a circumstance took place, which very much widened the breach. Nehemiah, who had been cupbearer to the Persian king, and had amassed immense wealth, was permitted by his master to come to Jerusalem, in the capacity of governor. He there found various



abuses to have crept into their sacred things. Among others, Eliashib, the high priest, had married a grandson to the daughter of Sanballat the governor of the Samaritans, and the last record of the Old Testament, is his banishment from Judea. From Josephus we learn that the name of this priest was Manasseh, and that his father-in-law, Sanballat, to compensate him for the loss of the high priesthood at Jerusalem, promised him that he would build him a temple on Mount Gerizim, and bestow on him the sacerdotal dignity. This promise he afterwards performed, and it is supposed that Manasseh took from Jerusalem, a copy of the law of Moses, from which was derived the Samaritan Pentateuch so famous in modern times. The building of this temple, served still farther to exasperate the two nations against each other. Their hostilities were waged not only in Palestine, but were pursued even in exile. It is related in one of the Rabbinical books, that "Ezra, Zorobabel and Jeshua, gathered all the congregation into the temple, and brought in three hundred priests, and three hundred books of the law, and three hundred infants, and they blew trumpets, and the Levites sung and chanted, and cursed, and excommunicated, and separated the Samaritans by the sacred name of God, and by the glorious writing of the tables, and by the curse of the upper and lower house of judgment, that no Israelite eat of anything

that is a Samaritan's, for he that doth, does as if he eat swine's flesh. Nor that any Samaritan be proselyted to Israel, nor have any part in the resurrection." This horrid curse, though it sounds somewhat apocryphal, is a sufficient testimony of the state of feeling which existed when it was committed to writing, which was not long after Christ. They carried the same animosity into foreign countries. When Alexander had conquered Syria, Palestine and Egypt, and had determined to build the city which bears his name, he transported thither a large colony of Jews, and mingled with them were likewise, not a few of their old neighbors, the Samaritans. There in the reign of Ptolemy Philometor, one hundred and forty-seven years before Christ, the old animosity broke out afresh, and the parties came to open arms. Ptolemy in order to settle this dispute between them, which was of no more moment than which was the true temple, that upon Mount Gerizim, or that on Mount Moriah, commanded them to argue their cause before him by deputation. Two were appointed on each side, and so great was their animosity, and so confident were each of their cause, that they bound themselves by oath, that whichever should lose their case in argument, should be put to death. The Samaritans were vanquished and were executed upon the spot.

Another cause which contributed to their hatred,

was the fact, that Samaria became a sort of refuge, for fugitives and outlaws among the Jews. By the influence of these refugees, and that of the law of Moses, which gradually reformed their manners, the Samaritans became in the course of ages, quite as religious, and quite as just in their religious sentiments as the Jews themselves. Still the enmity continued, and perhaps was never greater than at the period of the ministry of our Lord. As it happened Samaria was directly between Galilee and Jerusalem, so that the Galileans were obliged to pass through that country on their way to their national festivals.

One there was, who was superior to these bitter and irrational prejudices. Let us see on what occasions he rebuked and condemned them. "And it came to pass, when the time was come that he should be received up, that he steadfastly set his face to go to Jerusalem, and sent messengers before his face, and they went and entered into a village of the Samaritans, to make ready for him. And they did not receive him, because his face was as though he would go to Jerusalem. And when his disciples, James and John saw this, they said: Wilt thou that we command fire to come down from Heaven, and consume them as Elias did? And he turned and rebuked them and said, Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of. For the Son of Man is come not to destroy men's lives, but to save them."

On another occasion, we read that a certain lawyer stood up and tempted him, saying: "Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life? He said unto him, what is written in the law? How readest thou? And he answering, said: Thou shalt love the Lord thy God, with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbor as thyself. And he said unto him, Thou hast answered right, this do and thou shalt live. But he willing to justify himself, said unto Jesus: And who is my neighbor? And Jesus answering, said: A certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among thieves, who stripped him of his raiment, and wounded him, and departed, leaving him half dead. And by chance there came down a certain priest that way, and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. And likewise a Levite when he was at the place, came and looked on him, and passed by on the other side. But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed came where he was, and when he saw him, he had compassion on him, and went to him, and bound up his wounds, pouring in oil and wine, and set him on his own beast, and brought him to an inn, and took care of him. And on the morrow when he departed, he took out two pieces of money and gave them to the host, and said unto him: Take care of him, and whatever thou spendest more, when I come again I will repay thee. Which now of these three,

thinkest thou, was neighbor to him that fell among the thieves. And he answered: He that showed mercy on him. Then said Jesus unto him: Go thou and do likewise."

This difference of the Jews with the Samaritans gave occasion to one of the noblest passages in the life of Jesus, whether we consider the exquisite humanity of his conduct, the sublime and glorious truths which he uttered, or the striking predictions which he delivered of the vast changes in the religious condition of the world, which he, then a solitary and weary traveller, was about to accomplish. It is one of the most beautiful pieces of historical painting in all literature.

Soon after he commenced his ministry he had occasion to go from Judea to Galilee, and he must needs pass through Samaria. "Then cometh he to a city of Samaria, which is called Sychar, near to the parcel of ground that Jacob gave to his son Joseph. Now Jacob's well was there. Jesus therefore being weary with his journey, sat thus on the well: and it was about the sixth hour. There cometh a woman of Samaria to draw water. Jesus saith unto her; Give me to drink. For his disciples were gone unto the city to buy meat. Then saith the woman of Samaria unto him, How is it that thou being a Jew, askest drink of me which am a woman of Samaria? for the Jews have no dealings with the Samaritans. Jesus an-

swered, and said unto her, If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith unto thee, Give me to drink, thou wouldst have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water. The woman saith unto him : Sir, thou hast nothing to draw with, and the well is deep ; from whence hast thou that living water ? Art thou greater than our father Jacob, who gave us the well, and drank thereof himself, and his children, and his cattle ? Jesus answered her, Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again. But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst, but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life. The woman saith unto him ; Sir, give me this water, that I thirst not, neither come hither to draw. Jesus saith unto her, Go call thy husband and come hither. The woman answered and said, I have no husband. Jesus said unto her ; Thou hast well said I have no husband. For thou hast had five husbands, and he whom thou now hast is not thy husband ; in that saidst thou truly. The woman saith unto him ; Sir, I perceive that thou art a prophet. Our fathers worshipped in this mountain, and ye say, that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship. Jesus saith unto her : Woman, believe me, the hour cometh when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor in Jerusalem, worship the Father. Ye worship ye know not what, we know what we wor-

ship, for salvation is of the Jews. But the hour cometh and now is, when the true worshipper shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth, for the Father seeketh such to worship him. God is a spirit, and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth. The woman saith unto him; I know that Messiah cometh, which is called Christ; and when he is come, he will tell us all things. Jesus saith unto her, I that speak unto thee am he. And many of the Samaritans of that city believed on him for the saying of the woman, which testified; He told me all that ever I did. So when the Samaritans were come to him they besought him that he would tarry with them, and he abode there two days. And many believed because of his own word, And said unto the woman: Now we believe not because of thy saying, for we have heard him ourselves, and know that this is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world."

What an emphatic rebuke to religious bigotry to the end of time! How odious, how contemptible, does he make that fierce and inhuman spirit to appear! Here were the Jews and Samaritans in near neighborhood of each other, the only nations on earth who worshipped the true God, both believing in the Divine mission of Moses, and both waiting for the same Messiah, yet of all nations bearing to each other the most bitter hatred! How insignificant and mean their sentiments and conduct! "The Jews have no

dealings with the Samaritans !” Why ? for any moral delinquency ? By no means. One worshipped God in Jerusalem, and the other on Mount Gerizim. But no such sentiment can find a place in the pure and magnanimous bosom of the Saviour ! His affections go forth to embrace humanity in every form, and they meet that return which frankness and generosity always receive. The brazen wall of prejudice, which for ages had separated Jew and Samaritan, is melted down, and many Samaritans welcome that Messiah with joy whom the Jews rejected with disdain. O ! that Christians were more like Christ, and less like the Jews and Samaritans !

This conversation is interesting on another account, as exhibiting the expectations of the Samaritans with regard to the Messiah. It shows them to have been more just than those of the Jews. They expected him to come and teach them all things with respect to religion. That office he really assumed. They expected him as the Saviour of the world. The Jews expected him as the Saviour of their nation and the destroyer of all others.

The Gospel was preached to the Samaritans by the Evangelist Philip, the next year after the ascension of Christ, with great success. A small community of them are still found by travellers at the foot of Mount Gerizim at the present day, preserving their ancient religion with all its prejudices. They are



said to have the oldest copy of the Pentateuch now extant.

The principal sects which we read of in the New Testament among the Jews, were the Pharisees and Sadducees. We read of no religious sects in the Old Testament, it is said, because there was then prophetic authority for settling all disputes. A more probable reason is, that the nation was not sufficiently advanced in intellectual cultivation to dispute about abstractions. The introduction of the Greek language, learning, and philosophy, by the conquest of Alexander, brought with it investigation, thought, opinion, and of course difference of opinion, in other words, sects and parties. When people think, they will differ. If they are wise and just, this difference will do no harm. But if they are destitute of wisdom and principle, opinion runs into party, and party into violence and persecution. Violence and extravagance on one side, produce equal violence and extravagance on the other, till both are driven to extremes.

Indeed the foundation for religious parties seems to be laid deep in the very elements of human nature. There always has been, and there always will be a division of the religious world into the moderate and the enthusiastic, the scrupulous and the people of common sense, when all the while one party is really, and at heart no better than the other. There are

some, who by natural temperament are susceptible, imaginative, anxious, who wish to do the commands of God, and a great deal more if they could. Such men form estimable characters; they necessarily win the respect of mankind. But there join themselves to this portion of society people of a very different character, though like them in exterior deportment. They assume great gravity and sanctity of manner, not because their hearts dictate it, but because they wish to share the same advantages with those who are sincere. These two different portions of the religious, by way of eminence, bear different proportions to one another at different times and under different circumstances.

On the other side are the moderate, men of cooler judgments and more phlegmatic temperaments. They draw a just distinction between the mint and the cummin, and the weightier matters of the law. They want something of the enthusiasm of feeling and the scrupulosity of conduct which characterise the best class of the more devoted, but on the whole they are found in all the relations of life quite as estimable, quite as useful, and quite as much beloved. They are more accessible, more candid, and more ready to make allowance for the weaknesses and follies which are incident to humanity. To this class join themselves another of an altogether different character, men of no religion at all. Their neglect of forms is

want of religious conviction, their liberality is licentiousness. As the first division is infested and disgraced by hypocrites, so is the last by profligates. Thus the religious world has been divided ever since men began to think and reason on religious subjects at all. Sometimes they go along peaceably together, and sometimes are in a state of alienation, one party accusing the other of hypocrisy, and the other its opponent of irreligion. The same elements ever exist, and the parties are as perennial as those of politics. Sadducee and Pharisee are as undying as Aristocrat and Democrat; and what makes the cases more parallel, both names are opprobrious, and a gross misrepresentation of the other's character and sentiments. How long these parties had existed in Judea we are unable to ascertain, but the first we read of them is in the first book of the Maccabees. Their first names were the Chasidim, translated by the Greek word Assideans, and Sadducees; that is, the Holy and the Just. The first sought a peculiar sanctity by adding certain traditions to the law, the other contented themselves with satisfying the plain and literal meaning of it, and rejected all traditions. Afterwards other questions were brought in upon philosophical grounds. A great doctor of the law and president of the Sanhedrim, having speculated on the motives which constituted virtuous action, declared that virtue must be perfectly disinterested, men ought to be good

for the sake of goodness, and any regard to consequences adulterates the motives. Two of his scholars deduced from this as an inference, that there were then no rewards or punishments in a future state, or perhaps no future state at all. This tenet seems to have been adopted by the sect, and to have been held by them in the time of our Saviour. They were divided by another purely philosophical question, the freedom or necessity of human actions, the Sadducees making man absolutely free, the Pharisees maintaining a sort of mixture of fate and free will.

The Scribes, of whom we read so much in the New Testament, were not a sect, but derived their name from their profession, which was the interpretation of the Scriptures, particularly the laws of Moses. This was originally the business of the Levites, who during the freedom of the Jewish Commonwealth, were not only the religious teachers but the civil magistrates of the land, and ascertained the people's legal rights as well as religious duties. After they lost their independence, the administration of the civil government fell into the hands of foreigners, and the Scribe subsided from a civil magistrate into a religious teacher. They belonged however, for the most part to the sect of the Pharisees, and held to the oral traditions as of equal authority with the law. Such were the two leading religious sects which divided the Jewish nation at the coming of Christ.

They together composed the national Senate or Council of Seventy, who managed all their religious affairs, and such of their civil interests as were left them by the Romans. They officiated indiscriminately in holy things, and often the chief priest himself was a Sadducee. Indeed the chief priesthood had long since gone out of the family of Aaron, and become in a great degree a civil office conferred by their conquerors on some court favorite. Into such hands had the administration of religion fallen, when the long expected Messiah appeared, to abolish the Jewish ritual, and establish a new sacerdotal order, and a worship which needed no temple or sacrifice, but which numbered among true worshippers all who worship the Father in sincerity and truth.

Which was the best, and which the worst of these two sects, we have now no means of determining. Christ says very little of the Sadducees, he only tries to convince them of their great error, the denial of the resurrection of the dead. Upon the Pharisees he denounces the heaviest woes, and accuses them of the most atrocious crimes.

The Sadducees and Pharisees both united in opposing Christ during his ministry, but the Pharisees with much the most bitterness. After his resurrection the Sadducees took the lead in persecuting his followers, because the very fact which the apostles asserted overthrew their fundamental doctrine, that

there is no resurrection. This circumstance throws light on the fourth chapter of the Acts, in which it is related, that on the feast of Pentecost, when Peter and John were proclaiming to the people in the temple the resurrection of Jesus, they were attacked by the Sadducees: "And as they spake to the people, the priests, and the captain of the temple, and the Sadducees came upon them, being grieved that they taught the people, and preached through Jesus the resurrection of the dead." Paul, who was himself a Pharisee, makes use of his coincidence in opinion with a part of the Council as the means of freeing himself from the accusation of his enemies, as we read in the twenty-third chapter of Acts: "And when Paul perceived that the one part were Sadducees and the other Pharisees, he cried out in the Council; Men and brethren, I am a Pharisee, and the son of a Pharisee, of the hope of the resurrection of the dead I am called in question. And when he had so said, there arose a dissension between the Pharisees and Sadducees, and the multitude was divided. For the Sadducees say there is no resurrection, neither angel nor spirit, but the Pharisees confess both. And there arose a great cry: and the Scribes that were of the Pharisees arose and strove, saying, We find no evil in this man, but if an angel or a spirit hath spoken to him, let us not fight against God."

That the doctrine of the Sadducees was a gross

departure from the national faith of the Jews, we have the testimony of the Saviour and of Paul. "Ye do greatly err," says Jesus to the Sadducees, "not knowing the Scriptures nor the power of God." Paul says before Agrippa; "And now I stand and am judged for the hope of the promise made of God unto our fathers; Unto which promise our twelve tribes, instantly serving God night and day, hope to come; for which hope's sake, King Agrippa, I am accused of the Jews. Why should it be thought a thing incredible to you that God should raise the dead?"

But we have more ancient testimony. In the Book of Wisdom, written by a Jew at least two hundred years before Christ, we have the following sentiments. "The souls of the righteous are in the hand of God, and there shall no torment touch them. In the sight of the unwise they seem to die, and their departure is taken for misery, and their going from us to be utter destruction; but they are in peace. For though they are punished in the sight of men, yet is their hope full of immortality. And having been a little chastised they shall be greatly rewarded, for God proved them, and found them worthy of himself. For God created man to be immortal, and made him to be an image of his own eternity."

## Lecture VIII.

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### JOHN THE BAPTIST.

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MATTH. 3: 1, 2.—In those days came John the Baptist preaching in the wilderness of Judea, and saying, Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.

Not only was the expectation of a remarkable personage universally prevalent among the Jews at the appearance of Christ, but the phraseology was already in use which designated what he was to be and accomplish. There was at the time of Christ a Messianic phraseology derived from different parts of the Old Testament, which embodied and expressed all their anticipations. Whatever inspiration accompanied the first composition of the prophecies, there was evidently none in their interpretation. This much was certain, that there was to be a Messiah, there was to be a new dispensation. No one knew precisely what he was to be. Imagination of course was set to work, and each one for himself formed his own, and made whatever passage of the Old Testament he chose, to be descriptive of his per-



son and office. Not only the imagination, but the passions were concerned in the formation of their expectations. The pious thought of him as a religious reformer, and the new state of things to be a condition of higher religious perfection. The Rabbins interpreted concerning the days of the Messiah such passages as this from the thirty-first chapter of Isaiah, "Behold the days come, saith the Lord, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah. Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt. But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel. After those days saith the Lord, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it on their hearts, and will be their God, and they shall be my people. And they shall teach no more every man his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord, for they all shall know me, from the least of them even unto the greatest of them, saith the Lord; for I will forgive their iniquity and remember their sin no more." This seems to have been the expectation entertained by the Samaritans, if the woman with whom Christ talked at the well of Jacob is to be considered as speaking the sentiments of the nation.

The universal expectation seems to have been, that he was to be a prophet like unto Moses, but greater.

In accordance with this sentiment, Peter in one of his first discourses after the resurrection of Jesus, cites the promise of Moses to the Israelites, just before his death, as applicable to Christ. "A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren like unto me, him shall ye hear in all things whatsoever he shall say unto you. And it shall come to pass that every soul, which will not hear that prophet, shall be destroyed from among the people." These were the sentiments of those who had seen the miracle of feeding the five thousand with a few loaves and fishes, bearing so strong a resemblance to the feeding of the Israelites in the desert. "Then those men when they had seen the miracle which Jesus did, said, 'This is of a truth that prophet that should come into the world.'"

Another and much larger class gave the Messianic prophecies a more worldly meaning. The Great Personage whose coming they shortly expected was to be a king, but greater than any who had sat upon the Jewish throne. It was with this expectation evidently that his disciples followed him through his whole ministry. And even after his resurrection they seem for a while to have entertained the same hopes. One of the first questions which they asked him after he rose, was: "Wilt thou at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?" And at the last supper they disputed "which of them should be the greatest," that

is, who should be highest in office in the new kingdom that he was about to set up. It was with this idea that he was hailed by the multitude into Jerusalem with the shout, "Hosanna to the son of David." This was the idea which Nathaniel meant to express when he said, on receiving the evidence that he was a prophet: "Rabbi, thou art the Son of God, thou art the king of Israel." That it was his temporal character to which Nathaniel here referred, we have sufficient evidence in the information which first directed his attention to Jesus. "We have found him of whom Moses in the law and the prophets did write, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph." The part of the Old Testament, from which this title and expectation were taken, was principally the second Psalm. The person described in this poem is represented as exalted by God to be a king on Mount Zion in Judea. The surrounding heathen are represented as being enraged. But God has nevertheless determined that he shall reign; and as a king sets his son upon his throne while he yet lives, so has God, as supreme king of Israel, exalted this person to share his authority, and pledges his own power to support his throne. One idea of the kingdom of the Messiah, derived from this Psalm, was, that he was not only to reign over the Jews, but destroy all other nations.

"Why do the heathen rage and the people imagine

a vain thing. The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together against the Lord, and against his Anointed, saying, Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us. He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh. The Lord shall have them in derision. Then shall he speak to them in his wrath, and vex them in his sore displeasure. Yet have I set my king upon my holy hill of Zion. I will declare the decree, the Lord hath said unto me. Thou art my son, this day have I begotten thee. Ask of me, and I will give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for a possession. Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron, thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel."

This Psalm was interpreted by the Jews almost universally of the Messiah, and the more readily as the title Anointed is translated in the Septuagint Christos, so that it there reads "against the Lord and against his Christ." The Messiah therefore was to reign in Mount Zion, one of the mountains on which Jerusalem was built, and reign over the Jews, and by God's assistance subdue the heathen by war and conquest, break them with a rod of iron, and dash them in pieces as a potter's vessel. Such was the kingdom which the great majority of the Jews expected their Messiah to set up.

The phrase, "kingdom of heaven," is taken from

the second chapter of the Book of Daniel. After foretelling that there should arise four great monarchies, the Babylonian, the Persian, the Grecian, and the Roman, the last of which should be a kingdom of iron, he goes on to say, "And in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed, and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand forever." In another passage: "I saw in the night visions, and behold, one like the Son of Man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought him near before him. And there was given unto him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages should serve him, his dominion is an everlasting dominion, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed." From this last passage was probably derived the opinion once glanced at in the New Testament, that the Messiah should never die. Jesus said on a certain occasion, "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me." The people answered him, "We have heard out of the law that Christ abideth forever: and how sayest thou the Son of Man must be lifted up. Who is this Son of Man?" The new dispensation under the figure of a kingdom was the subject of the commencing petition of one of the chief prayers recited

in their synagogues, from sabbath to sabbath, and had been so for ages. There was a time specified in the Book of Daniel of seventy weeks, which was to intervene between the building the second temple and the times of the Messiah, which, interpreting according to the prophetic style, a day for a year, would bring the period of his appearance some where near this time, at which John the Baptist began to preach.

So prevalent had this expectation become that it had spread beyond the Holy Land. Tacitus, a historian who wrote in Italy, records the fact, that among many "there was a persuasion, that in the ancient books of the priesthood it was written, that at this precise time the East should become mighty, and that those issuing from Judea should rule the world." Suetonius, another Latin historian writes, "that in the East an ancient and constant opinion prevailed, that it was fated there should issue at this time from Judea those who should obtain universal dominion."

This confident expectation of the Jews had already caused no little political disturbance. It was this proud anticipation of universal conquest, which made them so restive under the government of the Romans. That they, who were destined to reign over the world, and whose King Messiah was to have the heathen for his inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for a possession, were to break them with a rod of iron, and dash them in pieces like a

potter's vessel, should be in vassalage to a foreign power, was more than they could bear. Josephus relates that about the time of the birth of Christ, when Cyrenius was sent to take a census of Judea, Judas, a native of Gamala in Galilee, rose up, and resisted the Roman commissioner, and raised a great rebellion. He is mentioned likewise by Gamaliel, in his speech before the Jewish Sanhedrim, when the apostles were brought before them for preaching Jesus as the Messiah immediately after his ascension. "After this man rose up Judas of Galilee, in the days of taxing, and drew away much people after him; he also perished, and all, as many as obeyed him, were dispersed." Josephus speaks generally of the troubles of those times, without specifying their causes. "And now Judea was full of robberies, and as the several companies of the seditious would light upon any one to head them, he was created a king immediately, in order to do mischief to the public." This was exactly the state of the country during the ministry of Jesus, and it explains his caution in proclaiming himself the Messiah, and his withdrawal as soon as a multitude collected about him and manifested any tendency to sedition or disturbance. It is recorded of him that after the miracle of feeding the five thousand, and the declaration made concerning him; "This of a truth is that prophet that should come into the world." "When Jesus therefore per-

ceived that they would come and take him by force, and make him a king, he departed again into a mountain himself alone." In another instance likewise, when he had healed the man at the pool of Bethesda: "And he that was healed wist not who it was; for Jesus had conveyed himself away, a multitude being in that place."

Such being the expectation of the Jews, as we learn, both from the New Testament and from profane history, a man of singular habits and appearance began to preach in a retired part of Judea, where there were but few large towns, not literally a desert as it is rendered in our Bible, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." This man was of the sacerdotal tribe, and had been consecrated to God from his infancy by the vow of the Nazarite. His habits and dress were those of a hermit, his food such as he could pick up in the fields and woods. He was literally the voice of one crying in the wilderness, "Prepare ye the way of the Lord. Make straight in the desert a highway for our God." He professed to have been moved by divine impulse to proclaim the immediate approach of the Messiah. A man of such singular appearance, and bearing such an important message, produced a great sensation, and excited the strongest curiosity. Crowds from all parts of Judea flocked together to see and hear him. Some thought that he was the Messiah. His



fame soon reached Jerusalem, and the Jewish authorities sent a deputation of priests and Levites to him to enquire who he was. He told them that he was not the Messiah, but was sent to introduce him. "I come to point him out to Israel." Here was undoubtedly stated the true reason why he was raised up by Divine Providence, to prepare the Jewish mind for the great message from God which they were about to receive, to shape their ideas from the crude mass of traditions which had existed among them into some resemblance to the dispensation that the Messiah was about to establish. "There was a man sent from God whose name was John. The same came for a witness, that all men through him might believe. He was not the Light, but was sent to bear witness of the Light."

The effect of his preaching was precisely what was intended. He produced a strong impression upon the public mind, and though he wrought no miracle, all men held him to be a prophet. He presented a strong contrast, and probably by design, to the pretenders to a divine mission, who appeared about that time. It was on this account that the multitudes which gathered about him created no uneasiness in the public authorities. A man, like John, who clothed himself in the coarsest attire, in a country where the higher classes were studious of ornament, and all who had any pretensions to official dig-

nity were distinguished by gorgeous apparel, would naturally escape all suspicion of political ambition. A religious teacher evidently sincere and pious, and withal free from fanaticism and enthusiasm, after the cessation of prophecy for four hundred years, must have produced a great impression. He must have recalled to the minds of his countrymen the days when Elijah in a like simplicity and grave austerity stood up as a prophet of God, and the champion of religion. Some, indeed, mistook him for Elijah risen from the dead, who their traditions affirmed was to come to anoint and inaugurate the Messiah. The almost simultaneous appearance of the Light, and the witness to the Light, without any concert or collusion, was a strong testimony to the divine mission of both. With this argument alone, Jesus silenced on one occasion those who called his claim to be the Messiah in question. "The baptism of John, whence was it? From heaven or of men? They reasoned among themselves, saying: If we say of heaven, then he will say: Why then did ye not believe him," and of course, believe on him to whom he bare witness? "But if we say of men, the people will stone us, for all counted John as a prophet." It does not appear that John had any particular person in his mind when he commenced his mission, but was merely informed by God who sent him to preach, that the Messiah should be pointed out to him by

some miraculous appearance. He had known him before as a person of great piety and excellence, for when he came to him to be baptized, John says to him, as Matthew tells us, "I have need to be baptized of thee, and comest thou to me?" But as the Messiah he had no knowledge of him, for he testifies, according to the gospel of John, "I knew him not," that is, as the Messiah, "but he that sent me to baptize with water, the same said unto me: Upon whom thou shalt see the Spirit descending and remaining on him, the same is he that shall baptize with the Holy Ghost."

John collected around him a company of disciples whom he instructed in the things of religion, and many of them seem to have remained with him after he was cast into prison, till he was beheaded by Herod.

We have reason to conclude, I think, that his teaching shadowed forth, though imperfectly, the general system of Christianity. Jesus says of him, "that among them that are born of women, there hath not arisen a greater prophet than John the Baptist." Luke gives us some sketches of his discourses, and they bear a strong resemblance to the opening discourses of Christ. "And the people said unto him; What shall we do then? He answered and saith unto them; He that hath two coats, let him impart unto him that hath none, and he that hath

meat, let him do likewise." "Then came the tax-gatherers to be baptized, and said unto him, Master, what shall we do? And he said unto them; exact no more than is appointed you. And the soldiers likewise demanded of him, saying: And what shall we do? And he said unto them; Do violence to no man, neither accuse any falsely, and be content with your wages."

That John preached the essential doctrines of Christianity would appear from what we read in the eighteenth and nineteenth chapters of the Acts. "And a certain Jew, named Apollos, born in Alexandria, an eloquent man and mighty in the Scriptures came to Ephesus. This man was instructed in the way of the Lord, and being fervent in spirit, he spake and taught diligently the things of the Lord, knowing only the baptism of John. And he began to speak boldly in the synagogue, whom when Aquilla and Priscilla had heard they took him unto them, and expounded to him the way of the Lord more perfectly." In the nineteenth chapter; "And it came to pass that while Apollos was at Corinth, Paul having passed through the upper coasts came to Ephesus, and finding certain disciples, he said unto them, "Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed? And they said unto him, we have not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost. And he said unto them, unto what then

were ye baptized? And they said, unto John's baptism." Now here are two cases, in which those who had heard nothing but the doctrine of John, are said to have been Christians, to have been taught the things of the Lord, and to have been disciples. It follows then, of course, that John the Baptist taught the essential truths of Christianity. The object of the gospels being to record the teaching of Jesus, that of John is passed over in a very cursory manner. But that he taught often and much, as well as prophesied the coming of the Messiah, we have every reason to believe. His disciples, however, mingled some of the old forms with their new doctrines, for they fasted often, an observance which Jesus declared agreed no better with the new religion, than a piece of new cloth with an old garment, or new wine with old bottles.

The mind of John the Baptist furnishes a remarkable example, which we often meet with in the New Testament, of partial divine illumination, the clearest knowledge on some points, and absolute ignorance on others. By the light of inspiration he shadowed forth in few words the nature of the kingdom of heaven, whose approach he foretold, and showed it to be something entirely different from the expectations of the Jews, handed down from remote ages—yet of its details his ideas seem to have been vague, and he appears to have had no certain knowledge

that Jesus was the Messiah, though he had baptized him and received the heavenly sign of which he had been forewarned.

One truth which he announced bears evident marks of supernatural origin,—since it contradicted the conceptions and prejudices of the age,—that the Messiah and his kingdom were not to be national, not belonging of right and exclusively to the posterity of Abraham alone. There is a maxim, as common as the very letters of the alphabet, in the writings of the Rabbins, that “There is a part for all Israel in the world to come,” that is, in the kingdom of Messiah, merely by virtue of their descent from Abraham. That it was to be a kingdom selected from Israel, and other nations, a new community by no means co-extensive with the seed of Abraham, they had not the slightest idea. That it was to be a moral and a spiritual kingdom was as far from their conceptions. “Repent, for the kingdom of God is at hand. Bring forth, therefore, fruits worthy of repentance. And say not, we have Abraham for our father, for God is able of these stones to raise up children to Abraham.” Think not that you are to belong to the kingdom of God merely because you are descended from Abraham. God is able to raise up children to Abraham from a source now as improbable to you as the stones beneath your feet, from among the Gentiles even, whom you are accustomed to call dogs, and count as

the offscouring of the earth. A discrimination is about to take place, not between the children of Abraham and other nations, but between the good and the bad even among the Jews themselves. "The axe lieth at the root of all the trees. Every tree therefore, which bringeth not forth good fruit, is hewn down and cast into the fire. I indeed baptize you with water, but he that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear, he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire." He shall raise those who obey him to a higher degree of spiritual knowledge, perfection, and power, and punish those who disobey him with the severest suffering. "Whose winnowing fan is in his hand, and he will thoroughly purge his grain, and gather the wheat into his garner, but he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire." This is the same idea expressed in stronger language, the meaning of which is this, The Messiah's kingdom is not as you Jews expect, to comprehend the good and the bad, merely because they are the descendants of Abraham, but is to embrace the good only, who are to be gathered into a separate community, while the bad are to be abandoned to the destruction which their own wicked courses will inevitably bring upon them.

He not only preached the kingdom of God, as a separate society, distinct from the Jewish nation, but he actually began to set it up. The baptism, which

he instituted, was no idle, unmeaning form, nor did it signify simply a profession of repentance, but it began and founded a new community. Those who received it professed not only repentance as necessary to prepare them for the kingdom of the Messiah, now shortly expected to appear, but a readiness to believe on and obey him whenever he should evidently make himself known. "The law and the prophets," says Christ, "were until John. Since that the kingdom of God is preached, and every man presseth into it." The baptism of John and that of Jesus were essentially the same, one into a profession of belief in the Messiah yet to come, and the other into a profession of belief in the Messiah already come.

Thus John's baptism began to do, what his words began to predict, to separate the righteous from the wicked, to prepare the righteous for eternal life, and leave the wicked to the consequences of their sins; began to establish the kingdom of God, whose initiatory rite was baptism, just as circumcision was the initiatory rite of God's ancient church. Thus the kingdom of God came not with observation. While men were saying, "Lo here, and lo there," the kingdom of God was in the midst of them. But after all this knowledge of the nature of the kingdom, or Christianity, which was possessed by John the Baptist, and after baptizing Jesus with his own hands, and receiving the Divine testimony of which he had



been forewarned, so possessed was he with Jewish prejudices, of the temporal splendor and power of the Messiah, and so discouraged by his long imprisonment, that he sent two of his disciples to enquire if he were actually the Messiah. Jesus sent them back to tell all they saw and heard, and to leave him to form his own judgment, adding what throws light on the reasons of John's doubts: "Blessed is he whosoever is not offended in me;" who does not consider the lowliness of my appearance incompatible with the loftiness of my pretensions.

This good and holy man, having lived just long enough to see the rising twilight of the new dispensation for which he was sent to prepare the way, fell a victim to the intrigues and revenge of a wicked woman. Herodias, the wife of one of the sons of Herod the Great, accompanying her husband to Rome, there became acquainted with Herod the tetrarch of Perea, and after her return to Judea she abandoned her husband, and with her daughter Salome went to live with him, in open defiance of the laws of God and man. John, the intrepid prophet of righteousness, reproved such flagrant iniquity in high places, and said to the royal transgressor; "It is not lawful for thee to have her." For this bold testimony for righteousness he was sent to the castle Machærus, on the confines of Palestine and Arabia. But the sleepless revenge of

Herodias followed him even there, and he died, as is well known, a martyr to the truth.

Thus perished John the Baptist, the morning star of Christianity, and his dying eyes caught scarcely a glimpse of the glory that was to be revealed. His fate but prefigured that of the noble army of martyrs, by whose blood the foundations of the Christian church were cemented, that lofty edifice into which have gathered a countless multitude of the good and the great of all succeeding times.

## Lecture IX.

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### CHRIST'S FIRST DISCOURSES.

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JOHN 18 : 36, 37.—Jesus answered, my kingdom is not of this world. If my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews. But now is my kingdom not from hence. Pilate therefore said unto him : Art thou a king then ? Jesus answered, thou sayest that I am a king. To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness to the truth. Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice.

**THERE** is no subject which literature approaches with such diffidence as the personal character and history of Christ. There is no theme on which language is found so inadequate and imperfect. A person in human form, with every attribute of humanity, except sin, exhibiting perfect goodness in combination with infallible wisdom, clothed with extensive power over physical nature, and a knowledge of futurity at once extensive and circumstantial ; the declared end and object of a train of miraculous interpositions running back to the very foundation of the world, himself the beginning and cause of a new order of things, embracing the whole world and all

succeeding times; his doctrines destined to sway the minds of the millions of the human race, to form their opinions, to mould their characters, to shape their expectations, to reign in their minds and judge their actions, to convict and purify their consciences, to cleanse them from sin, and prepare them for his own society and the presence of God in the spiritual world,—worthily to speak of such a Being is a task before which I confess that my speech falters, and my vocabulary seems meagre and inadequate.

This difficulty remains, whatever view we adopt of his metaphysical rank in the universe. From the hoarse controversy as to the nature of Christ, so early raised in the Christian church, and which more than any other cause, has disturbed its harmony, I am most happy to escape. As the historian of Christianity, I am exempted from mingling in any such strife. The historian has only to do with facts. The facts of Christianity involve us in no controversy as to the nature of Christ. That belongs to the history of opinions, and volumes on volumes would not contain their endless diversity. What men have thought of the person of Jesus of Nazareth, and what he actually was, and did, and taught, and brought to pass, are two things entirely distinct. The former is a matter of mere speculation, the latter embraces all that is necessary to the Christian's life or hope.

We read of Jesus, that immediately after his baptism

and inauguration by John, directed by divine impulse he retired into solitude, where he passed forty days, in preparation, doubtless, for the great work in which he was about to engage. From this solitary sojourn, he returned filled with the spirit, with that measure of wisdom, and knowledge, and power, which was necessary for his mission to mankind. From that forty days' retirement he came back to the world with a scheme of religion entirely new. It differed from every thing that had gone before in being spiritual and universal. Its plan was perfect at first. It was not to grow up, and take such a form as circumstances might dictate; but with a plastic power, like that of the Divine Mind itself, it was to transform and mould all things according to its unalterable purpose. It is with reference to this fulness of knowledge, by which he was exalted not only above all the prophets which went before him, but all those whom he used as instruments in propagating and establishing his religion, that it is said of him, that "God giveth not the spirit by measure unto him." "The law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ." The divine plan being thus communicated to the mind of Christ, it was necessary that he should have the power of carrying it into effect. Having received this divine commission, it was necessary that it should be authenticated. The plan was divine, but such were the ignorance and

blindness of mankind, that it is not at all probable that the world would have recognised and embraced it as divine, had it not been authenticated by miracles. Mankind, particularly in rude ages, want not only truth but authority, not only truth, but the certainty that it is truth; or not being embraced with sufficient confidence, it will do them no good. Jesus returned from his forty days' seclusion, possessed of supernatural wisdom, which guarded him from all mistake, and enabled him in all circumstances to say and to do the thing which his present condition required; he came with miraculous knowledge, of the manner, for instance, and circumstances of his death, the success of his religion, and the spiritual power to which he was to be exalted. He came with supernatural control over the order of nature, such as is most striking to the unsophisticated understandings of mankind, to persuade them of the connexion of its possessor with God. His touch healed the sick, his will changed the elements, his command stilled the tempest, his voice raised the dead. But what was quite as striking to those with whom he associated, he could read men's most secret thoughts, and tell them the transactions of their past lives, and foresee what they were hereafter to do.

But the system, though perfect in itself, existed nowhere but in his own mind. How was it to be introduced? The human mind was not a blank on which

might be written the institutions and principles of the new religion. It was already pre-occupied. What was already there could not be annihilated or effaced. How could the new be made to supersede the old? It could not be done at once. It could only be done by degrees, by engrafting the new upon the old, where it was practicable, and by infusing into the current of language and thought, new principles, which might insensibly color the whole mass, thus superseding rather than destroying what was already in existence.

The Jewish religion was already in being, as the stock upon which to engraft his own. He himself was expected, but in another character from what he could assume. The whole phraseology was in use, which designated what he was to accomplish. What would the highest wisdom have dictated to him to do? What does the man who has a house to build, but has an old one already on the spot? Does he begin by giving it to the flames, or by throwing it all aside? No! He selects from it whatever is sound and incorporates it with the new building.

This was precisely what Jesus did with regard to the religion of the Jews, and the expectations and phraseology which were then in existence as to the Messiah and the new dispensation. To have rejected them would have made the task of introducing the new religion much more difficult. The only course

which wisdom could direct, was, to adopt the existing phraseology, and give it such a sense as would correspond with his real character and office. The Jews were accustomed to call the Messiah the "Son of Man," from the vision of Daniel, in which he saw one like "the Son of Man," invested with great power and dignity. He was likewise called the "Son of God" from the second Psalm. These appellations he assumed, and by assuming them, claimed all that belonged to the Messiah. The Messiah was expected as a king, and the new dispensation as a kingdom. This was not literally a fact, but was spiritually true in a sense transcending the most exalted conceptions of the most bigoted and ambitious Jew. Nor ought it to militate against this view of things, that it may seem to be inconsistent with perfect candor and fair dealing. No language that he could have used would have given them a clear conception of Christianity, as it actually was to be. Their own phraseology of a kingdom would come as near as any that he could adopt. What it was to be, time only could develope. We, who know what it is, acquiesce in the propriety of his use of the Messianic language, as it then existed, giving it at the same time such an interpretation as made it the symbolic expression of the highest spiritual truth.

To exemplify the principles I have laid down, to show the wisdom, the miraculous knowledge of Je-



sus, the full understanding that he had of the whole system from the beginning, and the manner in which he insinuated the glorious and eternal truths of Christianity through the Messianic phraseology of that time, I shall proceed to analyze some of his first discourses.

The ministry of Jesus began in Galilee, but at what time of the year we are not informed. Of his first tour through that country, in which he attended the marriage feast at Cana, we have only a general notice. Of his discourses nothing now remains but their commencing sentence: "Repent, for the kingdom of God is at hand." Multitudes soon gathered around him, and his fame spread throughout all Syria.

His first recorded discourse is that which he held with Nicodemus at Jerusalem, at the first passover which occurred after the commencement of his ministry. This conversation introduces us to one of the most interesting scenes of the New Testament. It presents us a practical proof of that miraculous wisdom with which Christ was endowed, which made him equally at home with the learned, acute, and experienced member of the Jewish senate at Jerusalem, and the humble, simple peasants and fishermen of Galilee.

"And it came to pass, when he was in Jerusalem, at the Passover on the feast day, many believed on his name when they saw the miracles that he did. But

Jesus did not commit himself unto them because he knew all men, and needed not that any should testify to him of man: for he knew what was in man. There was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews. The same came to Jesus by night and said unto him, Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God, for no man can do these miracles that thou doest except God be with him." There was much that was good, and much that was politic and cunning in this speech. It was non-committal throughout, altogether in keeping with the nocturnal interview. It acknowledged upon that evidence which is most convincing to the mass of mankind, his miracles, his claim to the prophetic character. He came with the Jewish conceptions of a temporal Messiah, with the hopes perhaps of conciliating his favor by an early avowal. He came by night, for fear of committing himself by open profession, but without the least doubt of an immediate and joyful reception. He was a man of experience and caution, he therefore framed his address in such a manner as rather to draw out Jesus than to explain himself. But explanation was unnecessary. Jesus saw into his soul, and answered to his thoughts rather than his words: "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of the God." You come to me with the old expectation, that the kingdom of the Messiah is by right of birth the in-

heritance of all the children of Abraham, that it is only necessary to be born of him to receive all its blessings. But it is not so. The kingdom of God is a new dispensation. Those who enter into it must be born again. The acute Rabbi sees at once the bearing of this annunciation, for it is purely Rabbinic in its texture. He therefore replies in the same mystic and symbolical language, so common among the religious teachers of the time, "How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born?" Can it be possible that the Jews, who have so long been the people of God, can need and undergo such a transformation as you seem to intimate, before they can be prepared for that dispensation which God so long ago determined to give them?" Jesus answered, "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, except a man be born of water and of the spirit," or rather spirit, "he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." The kingdom of God is both an outward and an inward institution. It is to consist of those who possess a certain spiritual character. This is the true kingdom. But as an outward institution, its initiatory rite is baptism. "That which is born of the flesh is flesh." Birth of the posterity of Abraham confers no spiritual character. A man is not necessarily prepared for the kingdom of heaven because he is a descendant of Abraham. "That which is born of spirit is spirit." Moral and

religious dispositions are transmitted from one to another by other means than natural birth. "Marvel not that I said unto thee, ye must be born again. The wind bloweth whither it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth; so is every one that is born of the Spirit." Spiritual birth, true religion, is not confined, as you Jews suppose, to one tribe or family. It is as free as air, and the kingdom of God, which you expect to be a national thing, will spread over the earth as that does, without any regard to the boundaries of nations and kindreds. Its empire is the soul, every where free, every where capable of receiving it, not more in those whose material bodies have descended from Abraham than those who have never heard of his name. If you really desire then to enter into the kingdom of God, to be my disciple, come not here by night, go openly and be baptized. Be a Christian, not outwardly alone, but inwardly; hear my doctrines, receive my spirit, and trust no more to your descent from Abraham. In the course of the conversation he glances at two other facts no less offensive to the Jewish prejudices of Nicodemus, the crucifixion of the Messiah, and the extension of his kingdom to the Gentiles. "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish but have everlasting life. For God sent his Son into

the world, not to condemn the world," not to destroy the nations, as you Jews suppose, "but that through him the world might be saved."

Such was the transcendent wisdom of the Saviour, from the very commencement of his mission. Before the wisdom of this youthful teacher, learning and age and experience were overborne and subdued, and Nicodemus must have retired convinced no less by his discourses than his miracles, that he was a teacher come from God.

Soon after this conversation, Jesus returned into Galilee, and passing through Samaria, held that remarkable discourse with the woman of Samaria at the well of Jacob, which I have noticed in a former lecture. On his arrival at Nazareth, his previous residence, he attempted to preach in the synagogue where he had been accustomed to worship. The people listened to the first part of his discourse with pleasure and admiration, though, according to a strong propensity of human nature, they were disposed to sneer at him as the son of a carpenter. At the first hint however, of the doctrine that the new dispensation was not to be a national religion, but to be extended to Gentile as well as Jew, they became violently enraged. They might have been led to suspect that he was not altogether sound in the national faith of a Messiah who was to destroy the heathen, from his manner of quoting that striking passage of

Isaiah: "The spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach glad tidings to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the broken hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovery of sight to the blind; to set at liberty them that are bound, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord;"—here he stopped. The rest of the sentence is, "and the day of vengeance of our God." Had he quoted the rest of this passage without explanation, as applicable to himself, they would have understood him to sanction their expectation that he was to destroy and not to save the other nations of the earth, and cried out perhaps, Hosanna to the son of David. But not only did he pass over this most important part of their Messianic traditions, so comforting to them under their present political oppression, but he went on to intimate that the heathen were not only to be spared, but to be admitted into the kingdom of the Messiah. "I tell you of a truth, many widows were in Israel in the days of Elias, but unto none of them was Elias sent save unto Sarepta, a city of Sidon, unto a woman that was a widow. And many lepers were in Israel in the days of Eliseus the prophet, and none of them was cleansed saving Naaman the Syrian." This was too much. A Messiah who could tolerate, or look favorably upon the heathen, was not to be endured. "And all they in the synagogue, when they heard these things, were filled with wrath, and rose up and thrust him out of

the city, and led him to the brow of the hill whereon their city was built, that they might cast him down headlong. But he, passing through the midst of them, went his way, and came down to Capernaum, a city of Galilee, and taught them on the sabbath days."

The fame of his miracles and his doctrines went on to increase, till the synagogues became too small to contain the crowds who resorted to hear him. He began therefore, to teach them in the open air. Once he preached to them from a ship, while they stood on the shore; once from a rising ground, that his voice might be the better heard by so vast a multitude. His discourse on this occasion is denominated from the place where it was delivered, the Sermon on the Mount. Let us examine its contents, and mark the wonderful wisdom which it displays, wrapping up eternal truths in language precisely adapted to present circumstances; so that the Jew, when he heard it, was cured of his errors, and the Christian to all time finds himself edified, as if it had been addressed to him alone. In that vast multitude, which was assembled from all parts of Judea, there were, it is probable, men of all the different sentiments which were cherished by the Jewish people at that period, uniting in but one common sentiment, that the Messiah should be a temporal deliverer, should cleanse Jerusalem and the Holy Land of the Roman

standards which were perched on every tower, and redeem the people of God from the degrading tribute they were yearly compelled to pay. They were ready to take up arms in the holy cause of patriotism and religion. They wanted but the signal of his hand to take up their line of march to the city of David, and there they supposed that he would stand highest in the new monarchy, whose sword had drank most freely of the blood of the slain. They collected about him with hearts bursting with national pride and ambition. What must have been their astonishment and disappointment when the first sentence fell from his lips, "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." The kingdom of God, which you have been so long expecting, is not an empire of war and conquest, nor is it that of the Jews, to be exercised over foreign nations. It belongs to the humble, the quiet, the contented. It does not come as a cure for outward misfortunes, for political evils, for the relief of proud hearts rankling under oppression, but it speaks comfort to those who are bowed down under the sorrows of life: "Blessed are they who mourn, for they shall be comforted." You expect the Messiah to vindicate the weak against the strong, to repel injury, to revenge insult,—that he will set up his empire with the sword and defend it by the sword. "But I say unto you, blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth." The gentle



are those who are to flourish in the days of the Messiah. They shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace. You come to me expecting a sign from heaven, to be fed with manna from the skies, as your fathers were in the desert. I can promise you nothing of the kind. The blessings of my kingdom belong to those only who hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled. You expect under the Messiah a reign of bitterness and vengeance, that he will rule with a rod of iron, and dash his enemies in pieces like a potter's vessel. But I come to pronounce blessings on the merciful, for I assure them that they shall find mercy from their eternal Judge. You, who observe the laws of Moses, submit to innumerable ceremonial ablutions, and therefore imagine yourselves pure and prepared for the kingdom of God. I assure you that no such purification will be of any avail in that kingdom; "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God." The remedies which you propose for mortal ills are essentially defective. You imagine that they can be cured by violence and resentment, that evil may be remedied by evil, instead of being overcome with good. But I say unto you, "Blessed are the peace-makers, for they shall be called the children of God." They shall share the blessings of the new dispensation, not who are vindictive and resentful, but "Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness sake, for

theirs is the kingdom of heaven." So far am I from promising you temporal prosperity as the portion of the subjects of your expected kingdom of the Messiah, that I forewarn you, that instead of triumphing, you shall be persecuted; but your highest happiness shall grow out of it. Unexpected and astonishing to you as it may seem, I pronounce to you, "Blessed are ye when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and speak all manner of evil against you, falsely, for my sake. Rejoice and be exceeding glad, for great is your reward in heaven, for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you."

Such were some of the first discourses of Christ, so admirably calculated for those to whom they were then addressed, as well as to instruct the world in all ages. The Jews, while all their worldly hopes were withered as he proceeded, could not but feel their consciences touched and their moral nature enlightened; and the impression left upon them was astonishment, not unmingled with awe. They felt that his words carried conviction to their minds, for "he taught them as one having authority, and not as the Scribes."

This figure of the kingdom, Christ maintained to the last. It was thus in almost all the parables: "The kingdom of heaven is like a grain of mustard seed, which when it is sown, is the least of all seeds, but when it is grown, it becometh a tree, so that the fowls of heaven come and lodge in its branches."

“The kingdom of heaven is like a little leaven, which a woman hid in three measures of meal till the whole was leavened.” “The kingdom of heaven is like a wedding, from which the guests who arrived too late were altogether excluded.” But the most powerful and affecting use of this figure is in the scene descriptive of the general judgment, that final discrimination that must at length take place between those who have obeyed, and those who have disobeyed the Gospel, a discrimination which it wants no outward judgment to make, but every man’s conscience makes it for himself. This scene, though awfully and sublimely true, is merely a figure conformed to the Jewish idea of the kingdom of Messiah, and though most calculated to strike their fancies, conveys to all men in all ages a tremendous truth, which could not perhaps, be better shadowed forth in any conceivable language. “When the Son of Man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he set upon the throne of his glory. And before him shall be gathered all nations, and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats. And he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on his left. Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. For I was hungry, and ye gave me meat; I was thirsty, and

ye gave me drink. I was a stranger, and ye took me in; naked, and ye clothed me; sick, and ye visited me. I was in prison, and ye came unto me. Then shall he say also unto them on his left hand, Depart ye cursed into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels. For I was hungry, and ye gave me no meat. I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink. I was a stranger, and ye took me not in; naked, and ye clothed me not; sick, and in prison, and ye visited me not. Then shall these go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into life eternal."

## Lecture X.

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### THE APOSTLES CHRIST'S WITNESSES.

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**LUKE 6 : 12.**—And it came to pass in those days, that he went out into a mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God. And when it was day, he called unto him his disciples : and of them he chose twelve, whom he also named Apostles.

**THE** new religion, which Jesus was sent to teach, was not only to be preached by himself to that generation, but to be perpetuated to all time. His own ministry he knew was to be short, and to have a tragical end. It could be perpetuated in no other way than by choosing assistants while he lived, and training them to take up the work where he laid it down, to receive the Gospel from his lips, proclaim it to the world, and when their days should be numbered, commit it to others, who should be prepared in their turn, to instruct a new generation, and thus send it down to all future times. Had there been no organization of this kind, had Jesus chosen no Apostles, Christianity would have perished on the very threshold of its existence. Accordingly, not long

after the commencement of his mission, after a night of prayer to God, doubtless for Divine guidance and direction, he chose twelve men of his more immediate followers, and ordained them as his assistants and successors in the propagation of the new faith. To them he explained more fully the principles of his religion, which to the multitude, for fear of popular commotion, he veiled under the dress of parable and allegory. He sent them during his own ministry as heralds of his approach, to prepare the minds of the people by their instructions for his own more perfect teaching.

These twelve Apostles were men from the lower orders of society, of but slender literary and intellectual cultivation, without wealth or influential connexions. They brought no accession of strength or respectability to his cause. It may seem at first sight utterly unaccountable on any principle of human policy, that he should have made such a selection, and quite as unaccountable that he himself should have chosen to pass through his ministry under an exterior so exceedingly humble; that he should, in the language of the Apostle, have made himself of no reputation, and to all external appearances, taken the form of a slave. But when we reflect upon it, we find that it was dictated by the highest wisdom. His external humility only puts in stronger contrast his moral and spiritual glory. He was really so great, that nothing

external could add to the grandeur of his character. The fact, that without availing himself of a single external advantage, he established his religion which disappointed the hopes of his own nation and offered no bribe to any of the passions to which the ambitious appeal with so much success,—that he told his followers from the first, that they were to reap no worldly advantage from their connexion with him,—that his disciples were utterly destitute of those acquirements by which any cause is usually carried forward,—all these things throw the philosophical back upon the only sufficient cause of his success, the reality of his mission from God, the moral power which truth always carries with it, and those miraculous attestations which are the strongest evidence to the unsophisticated mind of man, of a mission from the Most High.

It may at first sight seem strange, when he might have gone up to Jerusalem and chosen his disciples from the most learned, gifted and accomplished of the Rabbinical schools which were then flourishing there, that he should have made such a choice. Over them he would have manifested the same immeasurable superiority, and might have wielded them to accomplish his purposes as easily as those humbler persons whom he actually chose as his companions. Between him, and the intellectual and cultivated, there would seem to have been a closer

sympathy than with those uneducated Galileans, who as far as we at this distance are able to see, were mere children in his presence. But this arrangement, like every other, was founded in the highest wisdom. The function which they were appointed to fill, did not call either for great talents or for extensive learning. They were to originate nothing, they were to add nothing to what he had taught. Their office was simply that of witnesses of what he had said, and done, and suffered. "And ye also shall bear witness," said he to his disciples, "because ye have been with me from the beginning." After his resurrection he says to them: "Thus it is written, and thus it behoved the Messiah to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day, and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. And ye are witnesses of these things." These words are found in the Gospel of Luke. In the Acts, the conversation is related at greater length: "Ye shall receive power after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you, and ye shall be witnesses unto me, both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost parts of the earth."

This being the office of the disciples, intellectual cultivation was not a necessary requisite. The qualities most necessary to a witness are, simplicity, integrity and courage. Through them the world has



received the Gospel. The more transparent the medium through which we receive it, the less coloring it takes from the minds through which it was transmitted. The consequence is, that we have in the Gospels the most simple and childlike narrative that the world has ever read. We do not see the historians at all. All we see, is Jesus Christ, his doctrine, his character, his life, his miracles. There is no attempt at the introduction of the philosophy or opinions of the times, with the exception of the beginning of the Gospel of John; and it is unnecessary to say that those fourteen verses have created more controversy in the Christian church than all the rest of the Gospels. What Jesus wanted of his Apostles was principally to be his witnesses to the world, and to all succeeding ages. On their testimony in fact, the faith of the successive millions of the Christian church has depended. The Gospels are nothing more or less than their testimony. Jesus himself left nothing written. All that we know either of him or his doctrines, we receive through them. Without their testimony we should not know that such a person had ever existed. Without their testimony we should not know what he taught, or how he lived. It was on the strength of what they had seen and heard, that they claimed to be the religious teachers of the world. The relation which the Apostles apprehended themselves to sustain to

Jesus as witnesses, is fully and clearly brought out in Peter's speech to Cornelius and his friends; "How God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power, who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil, for God was with him. And we are witnesses of all things which he did both in the land of the Jews, and in Jerusalem, whom they slew and hanged on a tree, him God raised up the third day, and showed him openly, not to all the people, but unto witnesses, chosen before of God, even to us who did eat and drink with him after he rose from the dead."

When the Saviour bowed his head upon the cross, and said, "It is finished," the Gospel was complete. He had discharged his office as a teacher. Nothing could be added to it, and nothing could be taken from it. The system was perfect. The duty of the Apostles was to promulgate it to the world. So you will observe, that the promise of divine assistance, so far as doctrines are concerned, goes no further than strengthening their memories; "But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost which the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you." They were occasionally instructed what to do, but never, that we read of, to preach any new doctrine which had not been taught by Christ himself.

It may seem strange to those who are accustomed to dispute about words and phrases, that Christ should have left nothing written, nothing which we can identify as the very words which he spoke. The stickler for creeds and formulas may lament that all the disputes of after ages were not anticipated and prevented by a written declaration of the Saviour, which would have been so plain that no dulness could have misapprehended, no ingenuity perverted it. We are fully justified, I believe, in asserting that no such precaution would have been effectual. Human language is essentially ambiguous, every word having a variety of significations, any one of which becomes probable only because it better suits the connection, the purpose, or the sentiments of the writer. Language is always addressed to reasonable beings, and it is necessary for them to exercise their reason in order to understand it. It is so with Christ's plainest instructions. We are always obliged to use our reason in order to decide in what sense his words are to be taken. When he tells us, "If any man come to me, and hate not his father and mother, and wife and children, and brethren and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple;"—are we to interpret this literally, and say that no man can be a Christian without hating father and mother, and sisters and brothers? By no means. And why? Because it is not reasonable to

believe that such was his meaning. We cannot suppose that Christ intended his followers to prove false to the most important relations we sustain in this life. We conclude, therefore, that he did not use the word hate in a literal, but a figurative sense, in the sense of loving them less than himself and his cause. So we interpret the precept which commands us to cut off a right hand, or pluck out a right eye. We do not cut off our hands, and pluck out our eyes, not because we are not literally commanded to do so, but because reason teaches us that he did not mean literally to be so taken. So whatever Christ might have left written, there would have remained the same difficulty of interpretation. We should still be obliged to rest on probability, just as we do now. We cannot be infallibly certain that we take a sentence of Scripture in the true sense, without possessing inspiration ourselves. We cannot know that we are inspired, without the power of working miracles, or unless some miracle were wrought for our sakes, for we could not otherwise distinguish those thoughts which were miraculously suggested from those which occurred in the ordinary operations of our minds.

Then, even had the Saviour left the Gospel written with his own hand, we should still have been compelled to rely on human testimony, that the same identical words were preserved. The thing then is

evidently better as it is. We should have been compelled at last to rely on human testimony, as to what Christ did, and taught, and suffered. What more competent witness could we possibly have, than that of those who were with him on terms of the greatest familiarity during his whole ministry? In what better form could we have this witness than in the Gospel according to Matthew, written by one of those who were with him from the beginning, and who was present at his crucifixion, who ate and drank with him after he rose from the dead, and who spent his life in propagating his religion? What more unobjectionable testimony than that of John, who had been one of the disciples of John the Baptist, who saw the inauguration, leaned on his bosom, and shared his most intimate friendship? As collateral proof, what more authentic than the memoirs of Luke and Mark, who were the constant companions of the Apostles, and heard them rehearse over and over the wonderful story of the teaching and miracles of Jesus?

Considered in this light, as human testimony, and it is the only light in which they can be regarded, those who understand the principles of evidence most thoroughly tell us, that their evidence is the more weighty and satisfactory from their slight variations from each other. Those who frequent courts of justice tell us that it is utterly vain to expect en-

tire consistency in the testimony of a number of witnesses, let them be never so honest and never so competent. Agreement in the main facts is all that is expected, and nothing would sooner produce suspicion of collusion than for two witnesses to make, word for word, the same statement. No human being ever told the same story twice in the same words, and in the same order. Nothing can be more evident than that the historians of the New Testament were subjected to the same common laws which govern the operations of the human mind. We have in the Acts, three different relations of Paul's vision and conversion, twice by himself in public speeches, and once from the pen of Luke, probably from his own lips in private conversation. Yet the three accounts all vary from each other in words and in circumstances. The four Evangelists all give us the inscription upon the cross of Jesus, yet no two agree in the precise form of words which was used. Matthew says, that the accusation was, "This is Jesus, the king of the Jews." Mark says, that the superscription was, "The king of the Jews." Luke says, it was, "This is the king of the Jews." John says, that the title on his cross was, "Jesus of Nazareth, the king of the Jews." Here then is a variation in the testimony. It is impossible that more than one of these inscriptions can be verbally accurate. But it creates no distrust, and not one in a

hundred of the Christian church has been aware of its existence. It is an immaterial variation, a discrepancy which must always be allowed in human testimony, and nothing could be more unreasonable or absurd than to allow the least shade of doubt to pass over the mind as to the reality of the inscription, because of this verbal discrepancy.

The first three evangelists have given us Christ's prayer, in his agony, at the garden of Gethsemane, but each of them in different words. Yet no man in his sober senses would think of doubting the actual occurrence of that tremendous scene on that account. If any thing in all the history of the past can be said to bear the native impress of truth, it is this whole transaction. These verbal discrepancies of the evangelists, so far from being any disparagement to the veracity of the historians, are among the strongest evidences of their substantial truth. They prove them to be separate and independent witnesses, that they did not copy from each other, nor agree together what they should write; and when this is taken in connexion with the fact, that the Gospels were composed at times and places distant from each other, for the use of different communities, and were brought together into one volume a long time afterwards, their trifling differences no longer seem strange, but their agreement most wonderful.

From the circumstances of the case, each of the

Gospels must have contained all that is essential to Christianity, and all that is necessary to salvation; for here were vast multitudes of people who had been made Christians, and kept so, by each of the Gospels, before they knew that there was any other in existence. Whatever there is then in the first and third Gospels relating to the genealogy of Jesus, showing him to be descended from the families of Abraham and David, without which descent the Jews of Palestine could never have received him as the Messiah, Mark and John who are thought to have written out of Palestine, and for Christians in other circumstances, have seen fit to pass over in silence, as unnecessary to the faith of their converts. So is any one puzzled by the obscure and peculiar form of expression used in the first fourteen verses of John's Gospel, and for want of contemporary lights, obliged to confess that he does not thoroughly understand it, he may know, from the fact that it is not found in all the Gospels, that his ignorance cannot be fatal to his salvation, as the Gospel of John was written long after the rest; and hundreds and thousands were converted, and lived and died Christians, without knowing one word of the speculation, or rather phraseology, which is found in the introduction to the fourth Gospel.

From this consideration of the Apostles as witnesses, and the verbal variation of their accounts, the most important results are deduced, results vital to the



peace and harmony of the church in all ages. The Apostles were witnesses to what—to his life and character, to his doctrines, his miracles, his resurrection and ascension. All these things had a bearing not on his nature, but on his office. They proved him to be the Messiah, a divinely authenticated messenger from God. Further than this, the evidence does not go. This was precisely the point, which they considered to be established by the evidence they had daily before their eyes. This was the substance of Peter's confession, after having been in the immediate society of Jesus, and heard his doctrines, and seen his miracles, and witnessed his spotless life. "Whom say ye that I am? Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." That the title, "Son of the living God," was merely a synonyme for Christ or Messiah, we have sufficient evidence in the fact that it is omitted altogether by Mark and Luke. Mark reports that he said, "Thou art the Christ." Luke, "Thou art the Christ of God." Besides, what the Apostles had witnessed, had a direct bearing on his office, but no relation whatever to his nature.

In the book of the Acts of the Apostles we have the record of their preaching for thirty years, and the testimony which they bear to the world, you will find, has reference to the office and not the nature of Jesus. Peter, in his first speech, says, "Ye men of

Israel, hear these words. Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you by miracles, and signs, and wonders, which God did by him in the midst of you. This Jesus God hath raised up, whereof we are witnesses." Paul, when he was at Antioch in Pisidia, addressed a synagogue of the Jews nearly to the same effect: "Of the seed of David hath God raised up unto Israel a Saviour, Jesus. For they that dwell at Jerusalem, because they knew him not, nor yet the voices of the prophets which are read every sabbath day, they have fulfilled them in condemning him. But God raised him from the dead, and he was seen many days of them which came up with him from Galilee to Jerusalem, who are his witnesses unto the people."

Such is the testimony of those twelve witnesses on whose evidence the faith of the Christian church has rested from the beginning. And nothing can be plainer than that their testimony, being founded on what they saw and heard, goes no further than the life, the doctrines, the miracles and the resurrection of their Master, and these all bear upon his office, what he was made by God the instrument of effecting. They have no bearing on his nature whatever.

If the Christian church had been contented with this, what boundless miseries might have been saved, what useless controversies, what unspeakable malice and uncharitableness! Arians and Trinitarians, Sa-

bellians and Athanasians, might have met in peace around the table of their common Lord. That men should have differed in their opinions of the metaphysical rank and nature of Christ was natural, and perhaps unavoidable. The Messianic and Oriental phraseology of the New Testament was necessarily liable to misinterpretation in remote nations and ages. There is no possibility, except by perpetual miracle, of restraining the human imagination. It was natural, particularly among the converts from Paganism, into whose hands the Gospel soon fell, that they should have placed him in every rank, from that of simple humanity to supreme divinity. But the misfortune was, that they should not have had the discernment to see that these opinions had nothing to do with Christianity, they must therefore be left open, and suffered to cause no alienation of feeling between those who entertained them. The ground of these questions is not covered by the Apostles' testimony. Their testimony goes to this extent and no farther, that Jesus lived, and taught, and wrought miracles, died, rose again, and ascended to heaven. Now this is equally true, and equally the foundation of Christianity, whatever hypothesis we adopt as to the metaphysical rank and nature of Christ. And now, after eighteen centuries of controversy, the only way in which peace can be restored to the torn and bleeding church, is to return to the simplicity of the Apostolic

testimony. There always has been, and there probably always will be, the widest differences of opinion as to the metaphysical rank and nature of Christ. This will do no harm so long as they are held merely as matters of opinion. But they become the cause of unspeakable mischief, as soon as one attempts to force his own opinions upon another. The question which is vital to Christianity is, not what Christ was metaphysically, but whether God did or did not send him to enlighten and save the world. The Apostolic testimony, the facts to which they bear witness to all ages, go to this extent and no further.

Just so it is with the doctrine of the Trinity. On this point, as a doctrine of Christianity, I can have no dispute with any man. To me it is a matter of abstract speculation. It has nothing to do, except incidentally, with Christianity. A man tells me, that he believes that Jesus of Nazareth was the Infinite Jehovah. I do not reproach him, I do not blame him, I merely tell him, that to my apprehension, his belief goes beyond the facts of the Apostolic testimony. I go back to the record of Peter's testimony after having been with him during his whole ministry, "How God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost, and with power, who went about doing good, and healing all manner of sickness, for God was with him." I ask him in turn, if he believes that that God sent Jesus of Nazareth to be the Saviour of

the world? If he answers in the affirmative, I welcome him as a Christian, I give him the right hand of fellowship, because he believes the very proposition which the twelve witnesses, whom Jesus summoned about him, were sent to testify to the world. I could not do otherwise as a conscientious man, whatever might be my private opinion, which ever of the thousand hypotheses I might adopt of the rank and nature of Christ. For I read in the second chapter of Acts, of the admission of three thousand into the church for their assent to a discourse of Peter, in which not one word was said of the nature of Jesus, other than that he was "a man approved of God by miracles and wonders and signs which God did by him," and that "God hath made that same Jesus whom ye have crucified both Lord and Christ." After this, I dare not propose any conditions of admission into the Christian church, which should involve any hypothesis as to Christ's nature.

Thus you perceive that the deeper we investigate the records of our faith, the more solid and substantial ground we find for Christian union, the more needless and unkind the divisions and alienations which have taken place in the church. There is but one thing necessary to bring them back into one fold, the adoption of the simple Apostolic testimony, and the requirement of that which they made the ground of their preaching to the world. "Ye men of Israel,

hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you by miracles, and signs, and wonders, which God did by him in the midst of you, as ye yourselves also know. This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we are witnesses. Repent and be baptized, every one of you, for the remission of sins."

This simple testimony of the Apostles is the real basis of all preaching, the only authority by which we stand up from sabbath to sabbath as the ambassadors of Christ, "as if God did beseech you through us, we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God." Unless this effect is produced, no matter whether you believe little, or much, ye cannot enter into the kingdom of God. What saves mankind, is not any opinion about the nature of Christ, for men may believe any possible propositions concerning him, and still be lost and miserable sinners. It is Christ, precisely as we see him in the evangelic narrative. There he stands as the Ambassador of God's mercy, pointing to the Father under the figure of the parent of the prodigal son. The language of this parable no sinner ever misinterpreted, and its invitation from God to him is, "Though thy sins be as scarlet, they shall be white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool." He stands there as the perfect teacher of truth and duty; "the way, the truth, and the life." His words fix them-

selves in the conscience as the ultimate convictions of the human soul. They put us at once upon trial, whether we will prove loyal to God, or false to every conscious obligation. In his history we see the pattern of a perfect life. In every relation he was faultless. In piety to God, in duty to man, he filled up the measure of all conceivable perfection. He not only lived, but died for human good ; his Gospel comes down to us sealed not only by his miracles, but by his blood. And when we go with the witnesses, and with them look into the empty sepulchre, we feel a stronger conviction that a morning is to dawn upon the night of the grave, than by reading ten thousand arguments for the immortality of the soul.

Thus is Christ judging the world, by proposing the tests which determine men's moral state, and his disciples whom he called from the fishing nets of Galilee, by promulgating his all powerful word, sit on twelve thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel.

## Lecture XI.

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### GRADUAL ILLUMINATION OF THE APOSTLES.

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JOHN 16: 7—14.—Nevertheless, I tell you the truth, it is expedient for you that I go away; for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you. And when he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment. Of sin, because they believe not on me. Of righteousness, because I go to my Father, and ye see me no more. Of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged. I have many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now. Howbeit, when he, the Spirit of Truth is come, he will guide you into all the truth: for he shall not speak of himself, but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak; and he shall show you things to come. He shall glorify me, for he shall receive of mine and show it unto you.

THE condition of the Apostles of Christ during his ministry was altogether without a parallel. They were preparing to be prime agents in the mightiest revolution that has ever taken place on earth, but in entire ignorance of the means by which it was to be brought about. Their ears were daily drinking in, their memories were treasuring up those eternal truths by which they were one day to sway the



world, still they comprehended them not. Many of them were preserved in the mere words by which they were conveyed, and left for time and events to unfold and explain. And his discourses and parables to the multitude, like the rich fruits with which God loads the autumnal tree, while they satisfied a present appetite, contained, moreover, within themselves, the seeds of another spiritual harvest, which should be developed and bear fruit in other and succeeding ages. The great truths of the new dispensation were gradually and slowly introduced. Their ideas of the Messiah and his kingdom were already formed, but they were erroneous. A struggle immediately commenced between the new and the old, which never ceased as long as they lived.

When the disciples first joined the more immediate society of Jesus, they were not only unintellectual but unspiritual. Not only were their views to be enlarged and corrected, but their characters to be elevated. From grasping aspirants, raised from an ordinary calling to a hope of great dignity, power and wealth, they were to be transformed to generous, high-minded, disinterested propagators of truth and righteousness among men. The discourses of Jesus must have had a strong tendency to bring about this transformation. Every word of his discourses is replete with the loftiest sentiments which can ennoble the human heart. In his presence, every selfish

propensity, every evil passion must have felt rebuked and repressed. Every religious susceptibility must have been cultivated, every just and humane emotion each moment called into exercise. Of all means of moral and spiritual culture, the society of the pure and excellent is the most efficacious. Nothing is so contagious as the dispositions of the soul. If you would form the soul to truth, let it associate with those who know no disguise. Would you cherish the gentler virtues, cultivate the society of those who have acquired the most entire self-control. Would you cherish habitual piety to God, the surest means is to live in the presence of those whose natures are filled with the highest reverence for sacred things. Men will never be taught by a parrot, let him string together the finest sentences, and pronounce them with the greatest propriety. Nor will they consent to imitate a machine, let its movements be adjusted with any degree of precision. The only teacher is a sincere and earnest soul. That alone preaches with unction from on high.

This moral transformation seems to have taken place in all the disciples except Judas Iscariot. His heart was so hard, his soul so debased, that even the society and teaching of Jesus made no impression upon him. A daily life of fraud and deception was sufficient to counteract all the redeeming influences of Christ's character, and plunge his soul farther and

farther into perdition. And when the time came for them to commence their immortal work of regenerating the world, they were morally prepared for the undertaking, and Judas was equally prepared for the result of his training, bribery, treason, remorse, despair, suicide, perdition.

But a great system like that of Christianity, could dawn upon such minds as those of the disciples only by degrees. It was the will of God that the new religion should shape itself partly by doctrines, and partly by events, doctrines anticipating events, and events interpreting doctrines. The doctrines of Christianity were completed in the teachings of Christ, but they were not understood, partly because that state of things had not come about, to which they were intended to apply, and partly because their minds were already preoccupied by expectations of a state of things totally different from that which really took place.

Christianity was established then partly by teaching, and partly by events; by teaching which prepared the way for and gave meaning to events, and events which interpreted and gave significancy to teaching. The fundamental error which blinded their minds to all that he said to them, was their mistaken expectations with regard to himself. They had no other idea than that entertained by their countrymen, that in a few months, or years at farthest,

when his cause had become sufficiently strong and popular, he would go up to Jerusalem, and take possession of the civil government, organise a monarchy, and put the twelve disciples into the highest offices. That such an expectation existed we have the strongest of all possible evidence, the excitement of those natural passions of ambition and emulation to which such an expectation would naturally give rise. On his last journey to Jerusalem to keep the passover in which he was crucified, attended probably by a larger concourse of people than had ever before surrounded him, Salome the mother of John and James the less, encouraged, doubtless by the greater familiarity with which Jesus had treated her two sons, came with them to ask the two first places in the government. "Grant that these my two sons may sit, the one on thy right hand and the other on thy left, in thy kingdom. And when the ten heard it, they were moved with indignation against the two brethren."

The first check which these hopes sustained, was the information that he was going up to Jerusalem not to reign, but to be crucified. This declaration was made under the most interesting circumstances. It was just after Peter's declaration of his full faith in Jesus as the Messiah. "Thou art surnamed the Rock, and upon this rock, will I build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it."

Peter was doubtless highly elated with this promise, though somewhat mysterious. To guard against any false and worldly hopes which his followers might cherish from his encouraging language to Pêter, he took that occasion to inform them of an event as dark and humiliating as his late promises had been magnificent. "From that time forth began Jesus to show unto his disciples, how that he must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief Priests and Scribes, and be killed, and raised again the third day." For such a prediction Peter was utterly unprepared. He thought his master must be under some strange delusion, or rather laboring under temporary hallucination. His words, when rendered into modern phraseology, are something like these; "God be merciful to you, you must be beside yourself."

This prediction, though reiterated many times during his ministry, seems to have produced no permanent impression. So it was with all the warnings he gave them of the baselessness of all worldly hopes grounded on their connexion with him. Still they went on cherishing boundless expectations of their destiny as the prime ministers of King Messiah. These hopes alone were sufficient to prevent their understanding the elevated character of his discourses. When he spoke of himself as a king, as coming with great power and glory, he

thought of being enthroned in the hearts and minds of the world, as swaying mankind, as he has done, from the invisible throne of truth. Their imaginations were crowning him on Mount Zion in Jerusalem, building his palaces, arranging his court, and assembling his armies.

In the meantime, affairs were taking such a turn, as to be preparing to fulfil his prophecies, and to disappoint their hopes. Jesus had publicly appeared as the Messiah of the Jews, but altogether failed to meet their national expectations. They had expected a military hero and deliverer, and lo! the meekest of men! They had expected the Son of David with an outward splendor, at least as imposing as that of David and Solomon, and, behold! he was so poor that he had not where to lay his head! They naturally supposed that he would take to his society and his counsels, at least that part of the nation, which was most prominent for station, learning, religious sanctity, and civil dignity. But instead of this, he had chosen his followers from among the fishermen and tax-gatherers of Galilee, men alike destitute of rank and education. From both church and state, he held himself studiously aloof. That such a man as this should pretend to be their Messiah, they held to be not only a national indignity, but impiety to God, a bold profanation of a sacred character. But his offences had not been confined to

sins of omission. He had not only neglected the civil and religious functionaries of the nation, but had openly denounced them as utterly unworthy the confidence of the people. He had loaded with every term of reproach that part of society, which the multitude regarded as the most religious. He had publicly called them hypocrites, whited sepulchres, brood of vipers, wolves in sheep's clothing, blind guides, adulterers, thieves and robbers. He had intimated that the kingdom of the Messiah was not to be national, that the heathen were to be freely admitted into it, while a greater part of their own nation was to be rejected and destroyed. But what had irritated them to the highest pitch of resentment, was the hints he was reported to have thrown out, that their national pride and glory, the temple, which they had been forty-six years in building, and was just then finishing in the most commanding magnificence, had not long to stand, and instead of being its defender, he should in some way, be connected with its destruction.

A man who had committed so many enormities, in that period of violence and blood, could not long be safe. The Jewish council would probably have taken him off long before, could they have done so without implicating themselves, or exciting popular commotions. At any rate, they were determined to destroy him, and if it could be done under the forms

of public justice, so much the better. Jesus was now at Jerusalem to celebrate the Passover, therefore within their grasp. His late triumphal entry into the city, accompanied by a vast multitude acknowledging him as the Messiah, reminded them of his growing influence and popularity, and that some decisive blow must then be struck. Opportunely for them, treason was ripening in his own little company. One of the disciples, Judas Iscariot, a name blackened by eternal infamy, had been hardened instead of regenerated by the society of Jesus. His soul was so abandoned and lost, that neither the moral dignity, nor the miraculous powers of Jesus, made the least impression upon him. Day after day he could meet the glance of that eye, which read the thoughts and purposes of men, with the consciousness that he was false to his trust, and yet could persevere in the basest sacrilege. Thoroughly corrupted, he wanted nothing but the offer of the bribe, to sell his master and his soul, for thirty pieces of silver.

There have been since the beginning of time, but few nights like that upon which Christ was betrayed. The multitudes of the Jewish nation were assembled at Jerusalem to keep the Passover. Throughout the city and its environs, family by family, neighborhood by neighborhood, they were partaking with Psalm and pious converse, of the Lamb which reminded



them that their ancestors once came out of the land of bondage by an awful interposition of Divine Providence. In one group, assembled in an upper chamber, an unwonted scene is taking place. Jesus is there with his disciples, and he is telling them that this is the last time they are to meet each other around the table of earthly communion. Their familiar and confidential intercourse, so long the source to them of pleasure and attachment, is that night to be brought to a close. He is going home to God. The mansions of his Father's house already spread open their hospitable doors, and invite him to everlasting rest. But his separation from the acquaintances he has made, and the friends to whom he has become endeared, during his brief pilgrimage on earth, will be short. There is room in those rich and splendid apartments for as many as will come. There his own welcome awaits them, and his Father's too, whose greatness and benignity infinitely transcend his own. But lest these delightful recollections should fade away by time, he enjoins upon them when, in aftertimes, they were assembled together, to eat bread and drink wine in his especial remembrance, for this body, said he, horrible as it may seem, is soon to be broken, this blood to be poured out for human good. But to tell you the truth, it is expedient for you that I go away from you. My presence is a hinderance of your understanding the Gospel, for

it keeps you dreaming on earthly power and exaltation. Words have done their work. When I am withdrawn, God will send you another teacher in events, in emphatic actions of his own, which will interpret what I have said, and lead you into a full understanding of the truths I have taught. When I am gone, Divine Power and Providence shall be your guide. As it is, you have totally misunderstood me. It is necessary for you to bury your Jewish and worldly Messiah, that the true and spiritual one may rise in his stead. It is necessary that your hope of an earthly kingdom should be destroyed, that you may go to work heartily and intelligently to build up that spiritual kingdom in the soul of man, which shall stand for ever. Some signal event will be necessary to convince the world that my religion is from God, and is upheld by his own right arm, that they have been guilty in condemning and executing me. And soon the ruling powers will so feel the judgments of the Almighty, as to show to them and the world, that they have been opposing the work and the designs of the Omnipotent. The Jewish nation itself shall be destroyed, and no longer exist as a people. Of their proud temple not one stone shall be left upon another, their sacred rites shall be abolished, and the new religion freed from the cumbersome ritual of Judaism, and evidently under the

fostering care of Heaven, shall spread from sea to sea and from shore to shore.

In the meantime night rolled on apace, and the powers of darkness were no less active than those of light. Judas retired early from a scene where he felt his presence pollution, and joined himself to those with whom his black heart was more at home. He concerted with the Jewish council to surprise Jesus on his way to Bethany, where it was his custom to sleep. On his way there, he is met by the traitor in a garden, where he was accustomed to loiter, and betrayed with a kiss.

I need not go over the scenes which followed, and which terminated in his crucifixion. They are familiar to every memory and every imagination. I need not say how falsely he was accused, how cruelly he was treated, how unjustly he was condemned, and how brutally murdered. I only wish to show how necessary every progressive step of the tragedy was to the success of his mission to mankind. It is only necessary to remark, how those few hours of public and conspicuous suffering have planted him in the heart of universal humanity, have enthroned him in the affections and confidence of the world, and pour contempt on every method of accounting for the origin of Christianity by merely human causes. The cross itself, that symbol of all that was vile, would have tarnished with infamy any other than the tran-

scendent character of Jesus Christ. As the sun sunk that day below the hills of Judea, what a scene caught the glance of his parting rays! Jesus dead upon the cross, his mother with her companions at the foot, watching in speechless agony, his disciples paralyzed with grief and consternation, his enemies triumphing in his fate! Would you not say, that his cause lately so hopeful, was now ruined forever? A few hours more and he is shut up in the rocky sepulchre. Would you not have said, that himself and his religion were consigned to the same oblivion? Was there any probability, humanly speaking, at that moment, that his religion would become the religion of the world?

But this utter abandonment of his cause by all human resource was necessary to demonstrate to the world, that it could not have risen from its prostration except by Almighty aid. Infinite Wisdom had so arranged the plan, as to make the success of the mission of Christ depend upon his own interposition. He raised, as it were, an issue between himself and the Jewish nation, whether Jesus of Nazareth were or were not the true Messiah. They had denied him, and put him to death. Had it ended there, the triumph would have been on their side. To make the thing indisputable to all ages, his death was publicly witnessed by thousands, and his body delivered into the custody of his enemies. A stone was rolled

to the door of the sepulchre, soldiers were placed to guard against the fraud of his friends. There has always seemed to me a striking analogy between the stupendous miracle of the resurrection, and that of the sacrifice in the time of the prophet Elijah. Every precaution seems to have been used to make it as striking as possible. "And he put the wood in order and cut in pieces the bullock and laid him on the wood and said: Fill four barrels with water, and pour it on the burnt sacrifice, and on the wood. And he said, do it the second time, and they did it the second time. And he said, do it the third time, and they did it the third time. And the water ran about the altar and filled the trench also with water. And it came to pass at the time of the offering of the evening sacrifice, that Elijah the prophet came near and said: Lord God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, let it be known this day that thou art God in Israel, and that I am thy servant, and that I have done all these things at thy word. Hear me, O Lord, hear me, that this people may know that thou art the Lord God, and that thou hast turned their heart back again. Then the fire of the Lord fell and consumed the burnt sacrifice, and the wood, and the stones, and the dust, and licked up the water that was in the trench. And when all the people saw it they fell on their faces, and they said: "The Lord, he is God; the Lord, he is God."

To the imagination, which strongly recalls the times of the Saviour, a fearful suspense seems to hang over the earth from the burial of Jesus to the morning of the third day. The world pursues its accustomed avocations, regardless of the stake which millions unborn have in the fulfilment of the predictions of Jesus. When we meditate on the quiet of that sepulchre, and the world rolling on in its old channel, the disciples scattered, disheartened and dismayed, preparing to resume their old occupations, and to remember the ministry of Jesus as an inexplicable dream, we begin to think of the possibility of the great alternative of the Apostle;—"If Christ had not risen,"—what a different order of things mankind would have witnessed from that day to this! Idolatry would have been safe upon her throne. Ignorance and oppression would have been still the lot of man, and the noble army of the martyrs, who have dignified and adorned human nature, would have enjoyed nothing but the dim light of nature, as their only spiritual guide. But the plans of Omnipotence could not be defeated. The third day brought life and immortality, vindicated the claim of Jesus of Nazareth, and placed his religion upon a basis never to be shaken.

In the worldly and ambitious minds of the disciples, this simple event effected what words had been unable to accomplish. It interpreted and spiritualized

the whole Gospel. It transferred the seat of the kingdom of the Messiah from Jerusalem to heaven, from the outward life of man to the inmost recesses of his soul; and though it took away Jesus as their earthly guide and companion, it exalted him in oriental phrase to the right hand of God, demonstrated that Almighty Power was enlisted in his cause, and gave them a confidence which his own presence, in a state of humiliation, was unable to inspire. This event, together with his frequent interviews for forty days, and at last his ascension to heaven, gradually dispelled their Jewish prejudices and anticipations, converted them from ambitious aspirants for earthly honors to the preachers of a disinterested and spiritual faith, and sent them forth as the missionaries of piety and holiness. There was but one mistake which clung to them still, and which Jesus himself did not choose to correct, but left it to be the work of events and slow revolving years, their expectation of his personal and speedy return to earth. On this point they pressed him almost at their first meeting after his resurrection. "Wilt thou at this time restore the kingdom to Israel." To this question, which was plainly an unjustifiable prying into the designs of the Almighty, he gave them no direct reply. "It is not for you to know the times and the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power. But ye shall receive power after the Holy Ghost is come

upon you, and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and to the uttermost parts of the earth." As much as if he had said, With the ultimate designs of the Almighty you have nothing to do. He will order them in infinite wisdom. Your duty is single and simple, to bear witness to the world of what you have seen and heard. Go preach the Gospel to every creature. And the time will soon come, when you will receive such tokens of the presence and aid of God, as will enable you to preach with confidence and effect.

Accordingly at the feast of Pentecost, ten days after the ascension of Christ, and fifty after his crucifixion, when the multitudes of the Jewish nation were again assembled at Jerusalem, the Apostles by some manifestation of Divine power, of the nature of which we at the present day can form no accurate idea, were prompted and emboldened to commence their great work of converting the world. The fact of their having been the witnesses of the most interesting and stupendous event that has ever taken place in the annals of the human race, the return to earth of a spirit from the mysterious unknown of the unseen world, and the promise of eternal happiness, which they were authorised to make from him to all who should believe on and obey him, transformed them in the eyes of the multitude from illiterate peasants to the ambassadors of Heaven. The miraculous powers



which they displayed completed the chain of evidence, and the spiritual world generally so dim and distant, for a while became a present, living reality. An enthusiasm broke forth, which rose above the realities of this diurnal sphere, which filled their hearts with a perpetual joy, and testifies to all time the extraordinary events which then took place, by suspending for a season one of the strongest passions of the human heart, the desire to retain our possessions.

Thus the promise of Christ was fulfilled, and the Spirit, the miraculous acts of God, took the place of Christ as their teacher, and led them into all the truth; took the things of Jesus and showed them unto them; established his religion in the world as an institution authenticated by God.

## Lecture XII.

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PAUL.

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ACTS 26: 19, 20.—Whereupon, O King Agrippa, I was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision, but showed first unto them of Damascus, and at Jerusalem, and throughout all the coasts of Judea, and then to the Gentiles, that they should repent and turn to God, and do works meet for repentance.

**THERE** is scarcely a person in all antiquity of whom we can form a clearer idea than the Apostle Paul. Of all the Apostles, he was the only scholar and literary man, and nearly a third part of the New Testament comes from his pen. Of all the Apostles, he was the most gifted and enterprising; and as he was delegated to an especial mission to the Gentiles, and carried the Gospel far into Europe, then the abode of our ancestors, there are strong reasons why we should feel in him a peculiar interest. The writings which we have of his, are letters to his converts, his acquaintances and friends. There is therefore room for the play of the personal feelings, and as these in him were always unaffected, warm and generous, they produce in us a personal sympathy which ardor and sincerity never fail to excite.

We have a narrative of a considerable part of his life, written by a companion, Luke, the author of the Gospel, one of the most exquisite pieces of biography, that is contained in all literature. More than half of the book of Acts is devoted to his ministry. Of his journeys, Luke gives us, for the most part, a clear and circumstantial account, and so exact is the correspondence between these independent writings, the Acts and the Epistles, so many and so apparently undesigned the coincidences between them, that a great and acute mind has drawn from them a chain of proof of the absolute historical truth of both, which is more conclusive, perhaps, than can be adduced for any fact whatever of ancient history. So striking and demonstrative is the reasoning, that one of the most determined infidels of the present age has confessed, that it has put the question of historical fact beyond dispute.

Robert Taylor, an English deist, near the close of a book which he wrote to disprove the Christian religion, has made the following remarkable admission: "Paley, in his *Horæ Paulinæ*, has contrived to substitute a very plausible and indeed convincing evidence of the existence and character of Paul of Tarsus, for a presumptive evidence of the truth of Christianity. The instances of evidently undesigned coincidence between the Epistles of Paul and the history of him contained in the Acts of the Apostles,

are indeed irrefragable, and make out the conclusion to the satisfaction of every fair enquirer, that neither those Epistles nor that part of the Acts are supposititious. The hero of the one, is unquestionably the epistoler of the other; both writings, therefore, are genuine to the full extent of every thing they purport to be; neither are the Epistles forged, nor is the history, so far as it relates to St. Paul, other than a faithful and a fair account of a person who really existed and acted the part therein ascribed to him."

This important admission establishes the fact, that, the history and writings of Paul are one of the strongest branches of the evidences of Christianity, and, perhaps, more difficult than any other to explain away. Indeed, once admit them, and it seems impossible to say where the enquirer can stop, short of an acknowledgment of the main facts of the New Testament. These writings prove Paul to have been a competent witness, they show him to have been a man of strong and cultivated mind, to have been first a persecutor of the Christians, to have had all his worldly hopes, feelings, and ambition, identified with opposition to Jesus and his cause. They prove him on a sudden to have abandoned his worldly hopes and prospects, and embraced the cause he formerly persecuted, alleging as the reason, a miraculous interposition addressed to his senses, in the light of noon-day, confirmed by frequent interviews with Jesus

from the spiritual world. This testimony he sealed by the consistent conduct of a whole life, by labors, and sacrifices, and dangers, and finally by death itself. These historical facts demand of every reasonable mind a satisfactory explanation. They drive every candid enquirer into one of these conclusions; that Christianity is true; or Paul was deceived by an overheated imagination; or that he was an impostor, pretending to have been witness to miraculous events which never occurred. The absence of all motives to fraud, a character otherwise unblemished, the evidence of an abiding sense of moral obligation, and of deep religious feeling, and more than all, the devotion of a life to the moral and spiritual improvement of mankind, seem to be altogether inconsistent with the supposition that he was a deceiver. That he was himself deceived, and under a hallucination all that time, seems to be equally impossible. It continued for nearly thirty years, during which time he exhibited the clearest indications of a sound mind on other subjects. And what is still more improbable, his hallucination must have precisely coincided with that of twelve other men. Such a coincidence is altogether improbable upon the known principles of the doctrine of chances, and would itself be as much out of the order of nature, and of course, as miraculous, as those events which Paul professed to have witnessed. In all the history of lunacy, no two cases

have ever been found precisely alike. Twelve cases of a nature precisely similar, become altogether improbable. Abandoning then these two suppositions as improbable, one only remains as a satisfactory explanation of the history of Paul, that his witness is true, and Christianity a reality.

It was the intention of the Almighty that the religion of Christ should be an universal religion. Jesus understood it so from the commencement of his mission. Not so with his disciples. During his whole ministry, notwithstanding his repeated assurances to the contrary, they retained the Jewish idea that the Messiah was to be strictly national; and although almost his last words to them were, "Go teach all nations," for some years after his ascension, they confined their preaching to the Jews alone. Their education had been obscure, their intercourse with the world limited, and their ideas limited in proportion. Their minds do not seem to have conceived so vast an idea as an universal religion. This misapprehension of the Apostles, Divine Providence did not see fit to correct for several years, until the Gospel had been preached throughout Judea and the neighboring cities, and a numerous church gathered and established in that country. Then that Holy Spirit, which was promised to guide them into all the truth, to take of the things of Jesus, and show to his disciples, signified to Peter by a vision, that his

commission was universal, that he must comply literally with the command of the Saviour, and "go and teach all nations," calling no man common or unclean.

As the Gospel was now to be extended to the whole world, among the refined and cultivated Greeks, the lordly and dignified Romans, it would seem appropriate that some one should be added to the number of the Apostles of a more liberal education, and a larger acquaintance with the world, a person imbued with Gentile, as well as Hebrew learning, and qualified to defend the cause of Christ in senates and courts, before scholars and kings, magistrates and emperors. Such a man was found by an omniscient God in Saul of Tarsus. For the first few years of the preaching of the Apostles, no man in all Judea seemed less likely to become a proselyte to the new faith than he. He was an Israelite of pure descent, of the tribe of Benjamin, a tribe of an ardent temperament from the beginning. He was a native of Tarsus, a city of Cilicia, described by Strabo, a geographer contemporary with the Apostle, as a place of great wealth, and rivalling Athens and Alexandria in arts and literature. His father was of the sect of the Pharisees, and after giving his son, it is probable, the rudiments of an education at home, in which was included some knowledge of Greek literature, he sent him to finish his education at Jerusalem, under the tuition of Gamaliel, a most distin-

guished Rabbi at that time, of whom we read in the Acts, as a member of the national council. Here he distinguished himself by great attainments. About the time when he was of sufficient age to take a part in public affairs, Jerusalem began to be filled and agitated with the preaching of the Apostles. Already a considerable schism had been made in the national church. The Apostles asserted that the Messiah had come in the person of Jesus of Nazareth, that he had done the work of the Messiah, been crucified, but had risen from the dead and ascended to heaven. Before his departure he had commissioned them to preach to the world the doctrines which he had taught them, to found a new community by the initiatory rite of baptism, to be kept alive by public assemblies for prayer, mutual instruction, and partaking bread and wine in remembrance of Christ, as the author and finisher of their faith.

Paul seems to have been from the first, a sincere, an honest and religious man. At his public examination before the council of his former associates, he declared: "Men and brethren, I have lived in all good conscience before God unto this day." His life had been one of the strictest conformity to the law. His only fault, like many sincere and religious men, was religious bigotry and intolerance, the assumption that he was right, and every one else wrong; and the determination either to bring his opponents



to think as he did, or to exterminate them from the face of the earth. How much he had previously known of Jesus of Nazareth, it is impossible to say. Whether he had come to Jerusalem, during the ministry of Christ, is equally uncertain. The first we hear of him is as a young man being present at the execution of the first martyr, Stephen, and as keeping the clothes of those who stoned him. Educated, as he was, in the Jewish prejudices, and entertaining their ideas of the promised Messiah, it is evident that he thought him an impostor, and his religion a delusion, and one which ought be put down by any means. To extirpate this new heresy seems to have been the first enterprise in which he engaged after coming into public life. To crush the Christians was the great project of the day, and Paul entered into it with all the ardor and zeal which seem to have been characteristic of his temperament. How long he continued this course we are not informed. But Luke tells us, that "As for Saul, he made havoc of the church, entering into every house, and seizing men and women, committed them to prison." He says of himself, "I verily thought that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth, which thing I also did in Jerusalem, and many of the saints I shut up in prison, having received authority from the chief priests, and when they were put to death I gave my voice against them. And I

punished them oft in every synagogue, and compelled them to blaspheme, and being exceedingly mad against them, I persecuted them even unto strange cities."

His zeal did not confine itself to the Holy Land. He was determined to carry his persecution to Damascus, a city of Syria on the borders of Arabia. Providing himself with a commission from the High Priest, and a suitable number of attendants, he was approaching that city bearing misery to the Christians who were there, when he was suddenly arrested by Divine interposition. At noonday a bright light suddenly shone from heaven, with such intensity as to cause him and his companions to fall to the earth. While prostrate, a vision appeared to Paul of a person to him then unknown, which said to him: "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?" We, who before have heard him say to Peter, "Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these? feed my lambs;" recognize the speaker as Jesus of Nazareth. But Paul, who had never seen nor heard him before, enquires, "Who art thou, Lord?" The apparition replies, "I am Jesus, whom thou persecutest." Who does not here recognize the same gentle and affectionate disposition, which always identified Jesus with his followers? "And he, trembling and astonished, said: Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" And the Lord said unto him, arise, and go into the

city, and it shall be told thee what thou must do. And the men which journeyed with him stood speechless, hearing a voice, but seeing no man. And Saul arose from the earth, and when his eyes were opened, he saw no man, but they led him by the hand and brought him to Damascus, and he was three days without sight, and neither did eat nor drink. And there was a certain disciple at Damascus, named Ananias, and to him said the Lord in a vision, Ananias. And he said ; behold I am here, Lord. And the Lord said unto him, arise and go into the street which is called Straight, and inquire in the house of Judas for one called Saul of Tarsus: for behold, he prayeth. And hath seen in a vision a man named Ananias, coming in and putting his hand upon him that he might receive his sight. Then Ananias answered, Lord, I have heard by many of this man, how much evil he hath done to thy saints in Jerusalem, and how he hath authority from the chief priests to bind all that call on thy name. But the Lord said unto him, Go thy way, for he is a chosen vessel unto me to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel. For I will show him how great things he must suffer for my name's sake. And Ananias went his way and entered into the house, and putting his hands on him, said, Brother Saul, the Lord, even Jesus, that appeared unto thee in the way as thou camest, hath sent me

that thou mightest receive thy sight, and be filled with the Holy Ghost. And immediately there fell from his eyes as it had been scales, and he received sight forthwith, and arose and was baptized. And when he had received meat he was strengthened. Then was Saul certain days with the disciples which were at Damascus. And straightway he preached Jesus in the synagogues, that he is the son of God. But all that heard him were amazed, and said : Is not this he that destroyed them that call on his name in Jerusalem, and came hither for that intent, that he might bring them bound unto the chief priest ? But Saul increased the more in strength, and confounded the Jews that dwelt at Damascus, proving that this is very Christ." In the speech which Paul afterwards made from the stairs leading from the temple to the tower Antonia, he relates the speech of Ananias with some variations. "A certain man named Ananias, pious according to the law, bearing a good character with all the Jews who lived there, coming and standing over me, said : Brother Saul, look up, and in the same hour I looked up on him. And he said : The God of our fathers hath forechosen thee to know his will, and to see the just one, and to hear the voice of his mouth, that thou mayest be his witness to all men of the things which thou hast seen and heard." In his speech before Agrippa, he relates what was said to him by Christ at greater length. He there relates,

that Jesus went on to say : " Arise and stand upon thy feet, for to this purpose I have appeared unto thee, for I have forechosen thee to be a minister and a witness, both of the things which thou hast seen, and of the things in which I will appear unto thee, delivering thee from the people, and from the Gentiles, unto whom I now send thee, to open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness unto light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and an inheritance among them that are sanctified through faith in me."

Such then is the simple narrative of the conversion of Paul, and I do not say too much when I affirm, that it bears all the marks of a real transaction ; and as it became the basis of the conduct of a whole life, we must admit thus much, that Paul at least thought it real ; and we are driven to the alternative, either to admit it just as it stands, or suppose a case of hallucination and monomania, such as the history of the world does not afford.

But Paul was converted from what, to what ? not from an immoral to a moral life, not from an irreligious life to a life of piety, for even in his persecution of the Christians, it appears that he had acted conscientiously,—but from the belief that Jesus of Nazareth was an impostor to the belief that he was the true Messiah, and he was commissioned to preach him as the Messiah to the Gentiles. The fact of

having seen Jesus after his resurrection, and having been personally commissioned by him to preach him to the Gentiles, constituted him a witness and an Apostle, and made him equal with the original twelve. To this, he always appeals for his Apostolic authority. To the Corinthians he writes, "Am I not an Apostle, have I not seen the Lord Jesus?" In another part of the same Epistle he says, "Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the Gospel, which I preached unto you, which also ye have received and wherein ye stand, by which also ye are saved if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain. For I delivered unto you first of all, that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures; and that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the Scriptures. And that he was seen of Cephas, then of the twelve. After that he was seen of above five hundred brethren at once, of whom the greater part remain unto this present, but some are fallen asleep. After that he was seen of James, then of all the Apostles. And last of all, he was seen of me also, as of one born out of due time." "And if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain. Yea, and we are found false witnesses of God, because we have testified of God, that he raised up Christ, whom he raised not up if so be that the dead rise not."

A question here comes up of the most interesting nature, as settling the view we must take of the writings of Paul, in respect to the amount and nature of those communications which he at different times received from Jesus, with whom it is certain that he had frequent interviews by vision after his conversion on the way to Damascus. The amount of Divine communication which he then received seems to have been this, that Jesus of Nazareth was the true Messiah, and that repentance and a holy life were to be preached in his name to the heathen, and they of course to be admitted into the church on the same terms with the Jews, which terms were belief in Jesus as the Messiah and messenger of God. The doctrine of immortality he considered, as we see from the quotation we have just read from his Epistle to the Corinthians, as involved in the fact of Christ's resurrection, which in turn was demonstrated by his having seen him himself. The interviews we read of after this, seem to have been intended for special direction as to his conduct, rather than general instruction. Indeed he seems to have needed no further instruction, for immediately after his conversion he began to preach in the synagogues of Damascus. The narrative tells us, that "straightway he preached Jesus in the synagogues, that he is the Son of God." And afterwards that "Saul increased more and more in strength, and confounded the Jews

that dwelt at Damascus, proving that this is the very Messiah." This seems to be the account which he gives of the matter himself, in his Epistle to the Galatians. After he had preached to them the principles we have now stated, some Judaizing teachers came down from Judea and taught them, "that unless they were circumcised and kept the law of Moses, they could not be saved." And in order to invalidate Paul's authority, they called in question his apostleship, on the ground, that he had not been of the original number, and must have got his commission at second hand, and not from Christ himself. This imputation he repels with the greatest earnestness. "But I certify you, brethren, that the Gospel which was preached of me is not after man; for I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ." What this revelation was, he goes on to state, referring evidently to the vision and the communication on the way to Damascus. "For ye have heard of my conversation in times past in the Jews' religion, how that beyond measure I persecuted the church of God. And profited in the Jews' religion, above many my equals in mine own nation, being more exceedingly zealous of the traditions of my fathers," and therefore, if any one could be expected to Judaize Christianity, it was he. "But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb, and called



me by his grace to reveal his Son in me, that I might preach him among the heathen, immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood. Neither went I up to Jerusalem, to them which were Apostles before me, but I went into Arabia and returned again to Damascus." Now from this, there is no evidence that he had any further communication concerning the Christian scheme, than he received through his own vision, and the message of Ananias, that Jesus was the Messiah, and that he was to be preached to the Gentiles.

It does not appear, that any more is referred to, in the following allusion to the subject in his Epistle to the Ephesians. "For this cause I, Paul, the prisoner of Jesus Christ for you Gentiles, (if ye have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which is given me to youward,) how that by revelation he made known to me the mystery, as I wrote before in few words, whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto his holy Apostles and prophets by the Spirit." The same truth had been shown to Peter by a vision at Joppa, before the conversion of Cornelius, "that the Gentiles should be fellow heirs and of the same body, and partakers of his promises in Christ by the Gospel. Whereof I was made a minister, according to the gift of the grace of God

given unto me, by the effectual working of his power, unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ."

That no other revelation is here referred to than the one at his conversion, would appear from his speech to the Jewish council, delivered when he was apprehended and sent to Rome many years after. The next vision that he there relates himself to have had after his conversion, was after his three years' sojourn in Arabia, and his return to Jerusalem. "And it came to pass, that when I was come again to Jerusalem, even when I was praying in the temple, I was in a trance, and saw him saying unto me : Make haste and get thee quickly out of Jerusalem, for they will not receive thy testimony concerning me. And I said, Lord, they know that I imprisoned and beat in every synagogue them that believed on thee, and when the blood of thy martyr Stephen was shed, I also was standing by, and kept the raiment of them that slew him. And he said unto me, Depart, for I will send thee far hence unto the Gentiles."

Christ seems often to have appeared to Paul, during his life, for his encouragement and direction ; miraculous intimations seem to have been made to him of the Divine will, and of future events, but we have no instance in which any new doctrine was communicated, not contained in the teaching of Jesus.

What then was the Gospel as preached by Paul? The same that was preached by the other Apostles, as contained in the four Evangelists and the Acts. The first and fundamental article which he preached to the heathen, we have in his speech at Athens, and it is the doctrine of one God, the Maker of heaven and earth. "God, that made the world, and all things therein, seeing that he is Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands." "He hath appointed a day in which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained, whereof he hath given assurance unto all men in that he hath raised him from the dead." When he preached to the Jews, who were already acquainted with the one God, he preached Jesus as the Messiah, as when he came to Thessalonica, where was a synagogue of the Jews. "And Paul, as his manner was, went in unto them, and three sabbath days reasoned with them out of the Scriptures, opening and alleging that the Messiah must needs have suffered, and risen from the dead, and that this Jesus whom I preach unto you is the Messiah."

He preached the doctrine of repentance. This, we have just seen, he preached at Athens, "but now commandeth all men every where to repent." This however, seems to refer especially to the sin of idolatry, of which he had just been speaking. In that passage which we quoted at the commencement of this

lecture, from his speech before Agrippa, he says, "that he showed first to them of Damascus, at Jerusalem, and throughout all the coasts of Judea, and then to the Gentiles, that they should repent and turn to God, and do works meet for repentance." Now how could he preach repentance to the Gentiles? They could repent only of what they had consciously done amiss, that is, what they had done in violation of the law of God written on their hearts. As our Saviour said on a certain occasion; "And even of yourselves judge ye not what is right?" It was to this law that he appealed, when "he reasoned to Felix of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come," and the hardened Roman trembled. He made the basis of his teaching those universal principles of righteousness which God hath written on all hearts.

He preached the resurrection. He was brought before the court of Areopagus at Athens, "because he preached Jesus and the resurrection." He preached, he tells the Corinthians, the resurrection of all men, as proved by the resurrection of Jesus. In his examination before Felix, he says, "And I have hope toward God, which they themselves allow, that there shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and the unjust." He preached a future judgment. "God will judge the world in righteousness."

Such is the Gospel according to Paul, and a comparison of his public speeches with his Epistles, fully

explains the phenomena of those compositions. Like the rest of the Apostles, he was miraculously made certain of a few great central facts, truths, and principles, which he was commissioned and assisted to preach to the world. In inculcating and illustrating those great facts, truths and principles, he drew upon the resources of his own mind, on his previous stores of Jewish and Gentile learning, and on the thoughts and analogies which suggested themselves to his mind at the moment. Those primitive truths are the Gospel, which is common to all the Apostles. The particular illustrations and arguments are Paul's, and bear the stamp of his peculiar mind. They add nothing to the certainty of the truths which they illustrate, for they are already certain on higher ground than that of argument, but they commend and render more intelligible those truths to those whom he addresses, and whom he is endeavoring to instruct. The Epistles, moreover, do not contain the general discourses of Paul, but only his particular directions and exhortations to particular communities of his own founding, which were called for by particular occurrences, errors, and sins, which he wished in his absence to correct. Such portions of them are applicable only to those to whom they were addressed, or to others in the same situation. They are, on the whole then, rather commentaries upon the Gospel, than the Gospel itself. These circumstances indicate to us the

light in which they are to be regarded, and the use that is to be made of them by Christians of succeeding times. They are not to be made the foundation of any doctrine as essential to Christianity, which is not plainly taught in the Gospels and in the Acts. They are to be read as a part of the history of the first age of the church, a record of the noble exertions and lofty sentiments of the most zealous and active of the Apostles. They strengthen our faith, for they carry with them the conviction that the writer was a sincere and holy man, a competent witness of all that he relates, too penetrating and judicious to be himself deceived, and too honest to lead others astray. They are invaluable for conveying to the mind a full impression of the reality of the main facts of the Gospel history, interwoven as they are with names and dates, and personal incidents, altogether analogous to the transactions of every day life. With much that is obscure, and not a little which seems to us rhapsodical, we see in them an earnest, sincere, religious spirit, generous sentiments, tender affections, entire disinterestedness, the most delicate moral feeling, true courtesy, manly courage, and a fortitude that nothing could overcome. When we follow him in his long and dangerous journeys, his cruel persecutions, his tedious imprisonments, and consider how many churches he founded, how many souls he prepared for heaven, we heartily respond to his triumphant

testimony when about to be offered up: "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me in that day."

## Lecture XIII.

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### FIRST CONTROVERSY IN THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH.

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Acts 15: 1, 2.—And certain men, which came down from Jerusalem taught the brethren and said: Except ye be circumcised after the manner of Moses, ye cannot be saved. When therefore Paul and Barnabas had no small dissension and disputation with them, they determined that Paul and Barnabas, and certain other of them, should go up to Jerusalem unto the Apostles and elders about this question.

THE religion of Christ encountered great difficulties at its first promulgation, and had much to overcome before it became thoroughly established in the world. Its first difficulty was, that no one except its founder, thoroughly comprehended it. Its spirituality was altogether in advance of the age. It contemplated what then had never been known or imagined, the separation of church and state. And one of the causes of the rejection of Jesus by the Jews, was his undertaking to make this separation. All the religions of antiquity were connected, more or less, with the civil government. Moses had united in his own person the functions of prophet, military leader,



and civil magistrate. That the Messiah should decline all secular functions, and take upon himself only a spiritual power, was, to his nation, altogether incomprehensible. That this was the surest way to universal empire, they had not the least idea. That Jesus of Nazareth, whom they saw only as an humble, unassuming teacher of religion, was laying the foundations of wide and enduring dominion, more deeply and securely than he could have done in any other way, was a truth which they had neither the intellectual nor the spiritual sagacity to discern. That millions of hearts would bow with the profoundest veneration before his moral perfection, that millions of minds, from the simplest to the most exalted, would acknowledge their allegiance to his superhuman wisdom, that he would reign by the divine power of eternal truth for ages and ages, was a conception too lofty for the minds of that worldly and corrupted people. But such was no less the fact. The very destitution of the kingdom of heaven of all they expected, an incorporation with the secular power, and the location of its seat within the fortifications of some strong city, was the reason of its perpetuity and universality. Had it been any thing local, identified with the fate of any city, throne, or nation, conquest or revolution might have swept it from the face of the earth. But having its seat in the soul, and its author being exalted to the spiritual

world, to be the same yesterday, to-day, and forever, it was raised above all earthly vicissitude. Kingdoms might come to nought, empires might be dissolved, languages might die, races might become extinct, heaven and earth might pass away, but the words of Christ, which are his spiritual sceptre, could not pass away. Wherever they sound in the ears of mortals, they come with the authority of God, and at this day, command the same homage which they did when first uttered eighteen centuries ago, and under the burning line or the frozen pole, they assert the same supremacy over the soul of man.

The second difficulty which Christianity encountered, was its connexion with Judaism. It was, in fact, a schism from the Jewish church, and it suffered alike from its enmity and its friendship. The same worldly-mindedness and bigotry which led the Jews to reject Jesus as their Messiah, led them to persecute his followers. The feelings which Saul of Tarsus acknowledged himself to have had towards the Christians, that he ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus, and that he was exceedingly mad against them, were shared, doubtless, by the mass of his countrymen, and hence, those bitter and furious persecutions which the Christians immediately encountered in Judea, by which they were driven into concealment, or else banished from the country.

But fortunately for the Christians, the Jews soon became involved in a struggle with the Romans, which so occupied and absorbed the public mind, that the Christians were overlooked, and enjoyed a season of repose.

But hardly was one difficulty removed, before another sprang up. Christianity was in peril of being identified with Judaism, of being fettered by its national and peculiar rites, and thus, instead of being fitted to be a universal religion, it was threatened with sharing the fate of that local and temporary dispensation. Many of the Jews were converted to the Christian faith, but they did not cease to be Jews on that account. They had no idea that their new religion absolved them from the obligations of the old. A new religion they believed to have been set up by divine authority, but the old one had not been formally abrogated. That had been established by Moses amid the fire and smoke of Sinai, it had been recognised by a long succession of prophets. Its sacred rites had been maintained, with few interruptions, for fifteen hundred years. The temple was still standing, nay, it had lately been rebuilt with greater magnificence than ever. There was then no outward indication that Judaism might not still flourish for centuries, apparently a religion recognised and sanctioned by Heaven. The unity of the Jewish nation, though under the dominion of foreign con-

querors, was still unbroken, the national feasts were kept, the Levites still ministered in the temple, and the successors of Aaron offered up the morning and the evening sacrifice to the God of Israel, according to divine appointment. The Almighty had not descended in cloud and flame to abrogate the law, which he had once established. Jesus had said nothing of abolishing the law and the prophets. On the contrary, he had said, that he came not to destroy but to fulfil them. He had said nothing about the Jewish ritual. He had merely left it out of his religion; he had passed it over in silence, or merely said in general terms, that the day was coming, in which men would worship the Father neither on Mount Gerizzim nor yet at Jerusalem, but the true worshippers should be those, who should worship him in spirit and in truth. This great truth was left to be developed partly by particular communication to the Apostles, by which they were to be led into all the truth, and partly by the course of things, by great and emphatic events in the providence of God, which could not be misunderstood. The chief and most conclusive was the destruction of Jerusalem itself, in about thirty-seven years from the crucifixion of Christ, the demolition of the temple, and the entire cessation of their national ritual. That event left the Christian religion the only religion recognized by God on earth. Then, in the sublime and highly figu-

rative language of prophecy, Christ came with power and great glory, when the stars of the Jewish nation were fallen, and the powers of heaven, the whole hierarchy, was overthrown.

But during the lives of most of the Apostles these things had not taken place, and while they preached the Gospel to the Jews alone, this amalgamation of Christianity with Judaism created no difficulty. The conversion of Paul in the year thirty-seven, four years after the ascension of Christ, with an especial commission to preach to the heathen, created no agitation of the question as to the relation of the converts from Judaism and Paganism to each other, for he did not return to Jerusalem, nor make the acquaintance of the other Apostles for three years. About the time of his return to Jerusalem, in the year forty, the truth was fully made known to Peter by a vision at Joppa, that the heathen were to be admitted into the Christian church without subjecting them to the ritual of Moses. In obedience to this vision, he goes to Cæsarea, and admits Cornelius into the church by baptism, on profession of his faith in Jesus as the Messiah.

By these two visions of Paul and Peter, the question was settled, as far as the Apostles were concerned, and wherever they went they afterward preached the Gospel indiscriminately to Jews and heathens. And a circumstance which facilitated the

introduction of the Gospel among the heathen was, that there were attached to the Jewish synagogues, wherever they were established in heathen lands, a class of persons who were called proselytes of the gate. They were originally heathens, but becoming acquainted with the Jews and their religion, were so far pleased with them as to abandon idolatry, and addict themselves to the worship of the true God. Still they did not incorporate themselves with the nation by circumcision, and the adoption of the ritual of that people. They however attended the worship of the synagogue, and listened to the public instructions, and were required, the Rabbins say, to observe what were called the seven precepts. 1. To abstain from idolatry. 2. To fear and worship God. 3. To do no murder. 4. Not to commit adultery. 5. Not to steal. 6. To respect magistrates. 7. Not to eat things with the blood. These precepts will in some measure explain the requirements of the Apostles, which they agreed to enjoin on the Christian converts from Paganism. These proselytes were made distinct subjects of address by the Apostles whenever they entered a synagogue out of Palestine, under the denomination of "those who fear God." Thus, when Paul came to Antioch in Pisidia, he entered into the synagogue, and being invited by the rulers, he stood up and said: "Ye men of Israel, and

ye that fear God, give audience;" that is, Jews and proselytes.

These proselytes, you perceive, occupied a middle ground between the Jews and the heathen; and with them, free from national prejudices as they were, the Gospel found a more ready acceptance even than among the ancient people of God. From them it was easily propagated among those upon whom the light of revelation had shed no ray. Thus it was in those churches which Paul gathered in Asia Minor, in Macedonia, and in Greece, the new communities, although formed within the synagogue, soon found a separate and a substantive existence out of it, and the church and the synagogue moved on, each in its own sphere, without clashing with the other. Within the bounds of Judea the case was different. The mass of the church were Jews, both before and after their conversion. Instead of merging Judaism in Christianity, they were disposed to merge Christianity in Judaism. Under the impression that Christianity was to be a national religion, that the kingdom of heaven belonged of right to them, they imagined that the heathen were first to become Jews before they could be Christians, and submit to all the cumbersome ritual prescribed by Moses. The Christian church then was composed of two discordant elements, the Jews of Palestine, still adhering to the institutions of Moses, and the Christian commu-

nities out of Palestine, observing only the peculiar rites and discipline of the Gospel. It was impossible that materials so discordant should mingle harmoniously together. For ten years we read of no jars. But at the end of ten years the church began to be agitated by the endeavor to make it a homogeneous body, not by discarding the peculiarities of Judaism, on the part of the Jewish converts, but by forcing the Jewish ritual upon the converts from Paganism. Hence the movement we read of in the fifteenth chapter of Acts. In the year fifty, certain men came down from Jerusalem, and said: "Except ye be circumcised after the manner of Moses, ye cannot be saved." This happened at Antioch, a city of Syria, not far from the confines of Palestine, where Paul and Barnabas were then preaching, and had gathered a church. Paul immediately perceived that the very existence of the Christian church was at stake. If he permitted his converts to submit to this demand, there was an end to Christianity as a universal religion. It must settle down as a subordinate sect of Judaism, and share with that narrow and exclusive faith, the neglect and contempt of the world. He therefore set his face against these Judaizing teachers from the first; "When, therefore, Paul and Barnabas had no small dissension and disputation with them, they determined that Paul and Barnabas, and certain other of them, should go up to Jerusalem unto the



Apostles and elders, about this question. And being brought on their way by the church, they passed through Phenice and Samaria, declaring the conversion of the Gentiles; and they caused great joy to all the brethren. And when they were come to Jerusalem, they were received of the church and of the Apostles and elders, and they declared all things that God had done with them. But there rose up certain of the sect of the Pharisees, which believed, saying: That it was needful to circumcise them, and to command them to keep the law of Moses. And the Apostles and elders came together for to consider of this matter. And when there had been much disputing, Peter rose up and said unto them: Men and brethren, ye know how that a good while ago, God made choice among us, that the Gentiles by my mouth should hear the word of the Gospel and believe. And God, who knoweth the hearts, bare them witness, giving them the Holy Ghost even as he did to us, and put no difference between us and them, purifying their hearts by faith. Now, therefore, why tempt ye God, to put a yoke upon the neck of the disciples, which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear. But we believe, that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, we shall be saved even as they, or rather they shall be saved even as we." The argument of Peter is here perfectly conclusive, and to an unprejudiced mind ought to have

settled the whole controversy. Peter, ten years before, had been sent by vision from Joppa to Cæſarea, to preach the Gospel to Cornelius, a heathen, or at most, a proselyte of the gate. While he was preaching to him and his friends, as it is related in the tenth chapter of Acts, they were affected by the same manifestation of divine power, which had recognized as Christians the converts from Judaism; "while Peter yet spake these words, the Holy Ghost fell on all them which heard the word. And they of the circumcision," that is, the Jews, "which believed, were astonished, as many as came with Peter, because that on the Gentiles also was poured the gift of the Holy Ghost. For they heard them speak with tongues and magnify God." These miraculous powers were justly understood by Peter, as a seal of recognition by God of those upon whom they were conferred, as accepted by him, as the disciples of Jesus, and belonging to his church, without any requirement of the Jewish law. Thus the Spirit was leading him into all the truth. "Then answered Peter, Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized, which have received the Holy Ghost, as well as we? And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord."

Peter, from the first, drew the right inference from his vision at Joppa, that Jews and heathen were to be amalgamated in the new religion, not by imposing

the Jewish law upon the converts from Paganism, but by the abandonment on the part of the Jews of their national peculiarities. Accordingly on his arrival at Cæsarea, and the conversion of Cornelius and his friends, he gave up his Jewish scruples, and ate and drank with them as if he had never been a Jew. But the Jewish converts at Jerusalem, so far from following his example, took him to task on his return for what he had done. "And when Peter was come to Jerusalem, they of the circumcision contended with him, saying: Thou wentest in to men uncircumcised, and didst eat with them." And it was not till Peter had told them the whole story of the vision, and the conversion of Cornelius, that they would be pacified.

Now, ten years afterward, Peter contends for the principle which was established by his vision, so far as to advise that no requisition whatever of the laws of Moses, should be made of the Gentile converts. James, who was then the head of the church in Palestine, seems to have advised a middle course, to enjoin upon them not to keep the law of Moses, but to abstain from certain things which were the most offensive to the Jews, and which very much resembled the requirements of the proselytes of the gate. And after Paul and Barnabas had told of their success among the Gentiles, "James answered, saying: Men and brethren, Simon hath declared how

God at first did visit the Gentiles to take out of them a people for his name. Wherefore my sentence is, that we trouble them not, which from among the Gentiles have turned unto God, but that we write unto them that they abstain from pollutions of idols, and from fornication, and from things strangled, and from blood. For Moses hath of old time in every city them that preach him, being read in the synagogue every Sabbath day." That is to say, there are Jews in every city, whom we ought to conciliate to the Christian church, by indulging their prejudices in things indifferent. To this advice of James the council agreed, and wrote a circular to the churches of Antioch, Syria, and Cilicia to that effect. Such was the decision of the first controversy which sprang up in the Christian church, and the history of this transaction affords the key to a large part of the Epistles of Paul.

Though the controversy was thus decided, the matter did not end here. These emissaries from the Judaizers at Jerusalem went on to disturb the peace of the churches which Paul had planted in Asia Minor, Macedonia and Greece. Especially among the churches of Galatia they seem, in the absence of Paul, to have made a deep impression, to have nearly subverted his authority, and to have been on the point of bringing them all under the Jewish law. To give more weight to their objections to the liberal doctrines taught by Paul, they called in question his apos-

tolie authority, on the ground that he was not one of the original twelve, and therefore he had no direct authority from Christ to admit the Gentiles into the Christian church without submission to the ritual of Moses. Understanding what was going on in Galatia, he was determined to put a stop to it, and wrote them the letter which we have, the fourth in order in our collection.

After the salutation, he proceeds: "I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another Gospel, which is not another; but there are some which trouble you, and would pervert the Gospel of Christ." And what was this other Gospel, which was preached by them that troubled the Galatians? It was this surely, that Jesus was the Messiah, and that the heathen who were converted to faith in him must likewise become Jews. And what was the Gospel which Paul had preached to them? It was this, that Jesus was the Messiah, and that he was to be preached to the Gentiles without any restrictions. This was his commission which he received at his conversion. Had it been intended that Moses should be preached, and his law in connexion with the new dispensation, Jesus, when he gave him authority to preach to the heathen, would undoubtedly have said so. Their Gospel therefore, and not his, was after human authority: "But I certify you," says he, "brethren, that the

Gospel which was preached of me is not after man. For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ."

He then goes on, in the second chapter, to show that the Gospel which he preached had the sanction of the other Apostles. Three years after his conversion, he says, he went up to Jerusalem to visit Peter, and abode with him fifteen days. This long conference with Peter after that Apostle had had the vision at Joppa, must have confirmed him in his interpretation of his own commission, that the Gospel was to be preached to the Gentiles without the trammels of Judaism. "Fourteen years after," says he, "I went up to Jerusalem," (to that council of which we have already given an account,) "and communicated the Gospel which I preached among the Gentiles, but privately to them which were of reputation, lest by any means I should run, or had run in vain. But neither Titus who was with me, being a Greek, was compelled to be circumcised. And that, because of false brethren unawares brought in, who came in privily to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus, that they might bring us into bondage. To whom we gave place by subjection, no, not for an hour, that the truth of the Gospel might continue with you. But of those who seemed to be somewhat, whatsoever they were it maketh no matter to me, God accepteth no man's person, for they which

seemed to be somewhat in conference, added nothing to me. But contrariwise, when they saw that the Gospel of the uncircumcision was committed unto me, as the Gospel of the circumcision was to Peter; for he that wrought effectually in Peter to the Apostleship of the circumcision, the same was mighty in me toward the Gentiles. And when James, Peter, and John, who seemed to be pillars, perceived the grace that was given unto me, they gave me and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship, that we should go to the heathen and they unto the circumcision."

He goes on to relate, that he had been more true to the great principle of Christian freedom from the Jewish law, than Peter himself, notwithstanding his vision and his speech at Jerusalem. "But when Peter was come to Antioch I withstood him to the face, because he was to be blamed. For before that certain came from James, he did eat with the Gentiles, but when they were come, he withdrew and separated himself, fearing them which were of the circumcision. And the other Jews dissembled likewise with him, insomuch that Barnabas was carried away with their dissimulation. But when I saw that they walked not uprightly, according to the truth of the Gospel, I said unto Peter before them all, If thou, being a Jew, livest after the manner of the Gentiles, and not as the Jews, why compellest thou the Gen-

tiles to live as do the Jews, who are Jews by nature and not sinners of the Gentiles? Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ; even as we have believed in Christ that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law."

Such was the first controversy in the Christian church between its Pagan and Jewish elements, whether the Gentiles were or were not to be subjected to the laws of Moses, whether men could be saved by believing on Christ and conforming to his religion, or whether they must become Jews as well as Christians. This was the great question of the age. It was intensely interesting to every church, for they were all composed of converts from Judaism and Paganism. It was naturally, therefore, the prevailing topic of Paul's Epistles to the churches he had founded. The great truth was certain to him by Divine authority, that Christianity was altogether independent of Judaism, and amply sufficient to sanctify and save mankind. This great truth he endeavors to commend to his converts by every form of analogy and illustration. But in considering the reasoning of Paul, it is necessary to make a distinction between proof and illustration. The truths which he wished to impress upon the minds of his converts, did not depend on reasoning for their certainty. They were made certain by miracle and



Divine communication. It is the object of Paul therefore, not to prove but to illustrate them, and point out analogies between them and other things with which his readers were well acquainted. It is not necessary that the truth he wishes to enforce should be a logical inference from the argument, but only that it should throw light upon it, and make it more comprehensible and more in accordance with the nature of things. "The heir," says he, in the fourth chapter of the Epistle to the Galatians, "as long as he is a child, differeth nothing from a servant, though he be lord of all, but is under tutors and governors till the time appointed of the father. Even so we, when we were children, were in bondage under the elements of the world. But when the fulness of time was come, God sent forth his Son made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons." Now it does not follow as a logical consequence, because a son becomes free at a certain age, when he is supposed capable of taking care of himself, that therefore, the Jews were to be made free, at a certain period of the world, from their law. There is only some slight analogy between the two cases. Man outgrows the discipline of childhood, and mankind outgrew the imperfect institutions of the Mosaic law, and required something better; and the very fact that the new revelation was made to a Jew, "one made under the

law," was in itself an abrogation of the law of Moses, and redeemed those who were under it from its obligations, for it superseded the ancient dispensation, and declared it imperfect and obsolete. Had Jesus belonged to any other nation, his religion would not have annulled the institutions of Moses, and there would have been two religions in the world of equal authority. Just so it is with his argument from marriage, in the seventh chapter of his Epistle to the Romans. It is an analogy, but not a proof. "A woman," says he, "is bound to her husband as long as he liveth, but when he is dead she may be married to another man. So we were once bound to the Jewish law; but now that is dead, we are at liberty to become connected with another dispensation."

Such is the argumentation by which Paul would convey to the minds of his converts the great truths, which he knew to be certain, independently of argumentation, and it was useful to those to whom it was addressed. But to us, who receive these truths without argumentation, the reasoning is useless, and to a great extent, uninteresting.

There are few things more curious than the uses which have been made of this controversial language of Paul in the different ages of the Christian church. In his age, justification by faith without the law, meant nothing more nor less, than the sufficiency of the religion of Christ to salvation, without submitting to

the law of Moses. The early Reformers, Luther and Calvin, turning it into a new sense, made it their grand weapon against the Papists. Narrowing down faith from a general term for the Christian religion, as contrasted with Judaism, into a mere belief in Christ, and changing works of the law into good works in general, they said: "If a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law, then that fund of merit, which the Catholics pretend has been accumulating in the church, upon the strength of which they sell pardons and grant indulgences, must be fictitious."

Then again it was wrested and perverted by the Calvinists against the Arminians, in sustaining the doctrine of human inability. "If man cannot be justified by the deeds of the law, then man can do nothing toward his own salvation, and God must save him by arbitrary election, or he is lost."

In our own days it is used with equal dexterity and equal disingenuousness by the Old School Divinity against the New. They say, "if a man can do nothing, it is vain for him to try, or at least to try to hasten God's time by machinery and excitement."

Thus the language of the first controversy in the Christian church has been perpetuated for the use of almost every one that has succeeded. In a few years this first controversy, which so long agitated the church, received its decision by the Providence of

**Almighty God.** That nation, which had expected perpetual duration and universal dominion, rebelled against the Roman power, and became engaged in a struggle with it for its very existence. In the year sixty-six, when all the Apostles except John had finished their course, having established the Christian church on a firm and permanent foundation, that war broke out between the Jews and Romans, which, for obstinacy and carnage, has scarce a parallel in the history of the world, and which resulted in the total destruction of the ancient people of God, and the final abolishment of their national religion. About this time a sudden madness seems to have seized the whole nation. Encouraged by the hope of a national deliverer, the materials of sedition every where seem to have simultaneously burst into a flame. Throughout the whole country, for the space of four years, there was nothing but insurrection, war and slaughter. The Jews became divided among themselves, and by mutual hostilities destroyed almost as many lives as the Romans, their common enemies. By gradual advances, that indefatigable people reconquered the whole country, and drove almost the whole population, a mass of depravity and crime, within the walls of their capital. This happened at the feast of the Passover. Six months this obstinate people held out against their besiegers, till exhausted by famine and wasted by sedition, they surrendered to their con-

querors, and the city and temple were levelled to the ground. Eleven hundred thousand perished in the siege, and ninety-seven thousand were sold into slavery. The great controversy was now decided, and Christianity rose up perfect, beautiful, independent, immortal, from the ashes of the institutions of Moses.

## Lecture XIV.

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### FAITH IN CHRIST.

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**GALATIANS 3: 7.**—Know ye therefore, that they which are of faith are the children of Abraham.

**JESUS** of Nazareth formed a new community in the world, on a principle hitherto unknown, that of faith or belief. The principle of association under the ancient dispensation was birth, hereditary descent. The posterity of Abraham, through Isaac and Jacob, were considered as sustaining a peculiar relation to God. In the Old Testament, they are called the sons, or the children of God. In the fourteenth chapter of Deuteronomy, it is said: "Ye are the sons of Jehovah your God. Ye shall not cut yourselves, nor make any baldness between your eyes for the dead. For thou art an holy people unto Jehovah thy God, and Jehovah hath chosen thee to be a peculiar people unto himself, above all the nations that are upon the earth." On this distinction they greatly prided themselves, thought themselves the peculiar favorites of Heaven, and therefore, sure of salvation. The outward badge of this relationship

to God was circumcision. The bond which connected the new community, was belief in Jesus as the Messiah, that is, the Anointed of God, a divinely authenticated teacher, and spiritual head. The relation to God into which a man was brought by believing in Christ, was very similar to that which was borne to him by the seed of Abraham. He who was born a Jew, was considered as bound to keep the law of Moses. And the moment a man believed in Christ, that moment he was bound to obey the Gospel, to become a Christian in heart and life. For to believe in Jesus, was to believe in him as a teacher sent from God, the founder of a new religion. The moment then, that a man believed that Jesus was sent by God, that moment all that he commanded had the authority of God. What he did therefore, afterwards, in violation of his commandments, had a more aggravated guilt than what he had done before, because it was not only in violation of the law written in the heart, but of an express and explicit declaration of the Divine will. The instant then that a man believed in Jesus as a messenger from God, that moment, from the very nature of things, he became subjected to his authority, was in fact a subject of his spiritual kingdom.

As soon as Peter confessed his faith in Jesus as the Messiah, "Thou art the Christ," Jesus recognised him as his first convert, the corner stone of the

new community, whose common cement, whose principle of association should be belief in him. Under the old dispensation a peculiar character is supposed to belong to the children of Abraham, and one of especial holiness and sanctity. "For he," says Paul, "is not a Jew, that is one outwardly, neither is that circumcision which is outward in the flesh. But he is a Jew that is one inwardly, and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not of the letter, whose praise is not of men, but of God."

But belief in Jesus as the Messiah, or as a teacher sent from God, was not only the bond of their association, but the instrument of their spiritual renovation and final salvation. For he who believes in Jesus, and acts up to his conviction, must necessarily become his disciple, because the very capacity in which Jesus appeared was as a religious teacher. He who obeys Christ, is spiritually renovated, is a child of God, and, of course, is saved here and hereafter.

Such is the view taken of this subject by the Apostle John in the introduction to his Gospel: "He came to his own, and his own received him not." To the Jews, of course, whom divine revelation had before separated from the nations of the earth. "But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name, which were born not of blood, nor of



the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." That is, though rejected of the Jews, Jesus, or God through Jesus, formed a new community, who though not born of the stock of Abraham, became the sons of God, by believing in Jesus as the Messiah.

This fact, that the believers in Jesus are the children of Abraham, and therefore the children of God, is the principal point of Christ's conversation with Nicodemus. "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God. Except a man be born of water and the spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the spirit is spirit." The true children of God are not the lineal descendants of Abraham. They are his spiritual children, who are spiritually renovated by my religion, they are the true children of God, rather than those who are descended from Abraham after the flesh." You have acknowledged the intellectual tie by which the members of the new community, the kingdom of God, are to be bound to me and to each other, that of faith, in saying, as you have said, "Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God, for no man can do these miracles that thou doest except God be with him." To complete the work it is necessary for you to be baptized, and publicly join the

new society, and then become spiritually mine, by becoming a true Christian.

It may seem strange why so much stress is laid upon baptism in the New Testament. "He that believeth and is baptized, shall be saved." It would seem unreasonable that in a spiritual religion, such as Christianity, baptism should be made apparently, though a mere ceremonial duty, a condition of salvation. The reason of this is, that when most of the world were idolaters and all wicked, baptism was the means of bringing men under the spiritual influence of Christianity, into the society of the followers of Christ, subjecting them to the transforming power of its worship, instructions, and ordinances, and withdrawing them from the contaminating influence of their former companions and habits of life, enlisting their sense of character and feelings of attachment, with new and purer associations. That is, to be a true Christian, a man must become so by belief, profession and practice.

That God should form a new community which should be bound to him and each other by a new principle, that of faith instead of natural descent, like the posterity of Abraham, was to the Jews a great stumbling block. Holiness and sanctity had so long been associated in their minds with circumcision and abstinence from certain meats and ceremonial pollutions, so long confined to the stock of Israel,

that they found it exceedingly difficult to believe that any one else could be acceptable in the sight of God. It was with the greatest difficulty therefore, that the Jews, who were converted to a belief in Christ, could be persuaded to allow the Gentiles to enter the Christian church without submitting to the laws of Moses; and to persuade them to abandon their own peculiarities, was next to impossible. To bring about this amalgamation, was the great burden of Paul's Epistle to the Galatians, and especially of that to the Romans, which is indeed almost a treatise on this very subject. The arguments and analogies he uses display the most subtil ingenuity.

To abase the pride of the Jewish part of the church in their law, and to destroy all confidence in themselves on account of it, and consequently all desire to bring the Gentile converts under it, he goes on to show in his Epistle to the Romans, that both Jew and Gentile are sinners in the sight of God; that the law, by increasing their light, increased the guilt of the Jews in all their transgressions, and that they, notwithstanding their privileges, were exceedingly wicked. In proof of this position of the sinfulness of the Jews, he goes on to quote from their own Scriptures: "What then, are we better than they? No, in no wise: for we have before proved both Jews and Gentiles that they are all under sin, as it is written, There is none right-

eous, no, not one. There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. They are all gone out of the way ; they are together become unprofitable ; there is none that doeth good, no, not one." These things he quotes out of their own Scriptures, whose authority they acknowledged, and affirms they are applied to them ; "because," says he, "we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them that are under the law, that every mouth may be stopped, or rather so that every mouth is stopped, and all the world becomes guilty before God. Therefore, by the deeds of the law, there shall no flesh be justified in his sight, for by the law is the knowledge of sin. But now the righteousness of God," or rather the terms of acceptance with God, "are manifested, being witnessed," or their principle recognized by the law and the prophets. Even the terms of Divine acceptance "which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all that believe;" that is, both Jew and Gentile. "For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God. Being justified freely by his grace, through the redemption there is in Christ Jesus. Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his terms of pardon for the sins that are past through the forbearance of God." As under the old dispensation, so under the new, no man can hope to be saved on the ground of absolute innocence alone,

a perfect compliance with the law. God must exercise mercy in both cases. As under the old dispensation, the sacrifices and the mercy seat sprinkled with the blood of the victim, symbolized the penitence of man and the forgiveness of God, so under the new, the death of Christ on the cross, as he died to bring man to faith, repentance, and reconciliation, may be considered as the perpetual symbol of man's penitence and God's mercy. Man's salvation must ultimately come from the mercy of God under all dispensations, and both Jew and Gentile must be saved in that way, or not saved at all.

But still that the Gentiles should be brought into as near and advantageous relation to God, by mere belief in Jesus as the Messiah, or a teacher sent from God, as they were by submitting to circumcision and the cumbersome and laborious ceremonies of Moses, was to the Jews a hard saying; and Paul goes on to reconcile them to it by arguments not indeed logically conclusive in themselves, but adapted to impress truths upon their minds which were certain by other modes of proof than logical deduction. This he does most ingeniously by quoting a passage from their Scriptures. The point to be shown was, that the Jewish converts ought to admit the converts from Paganism to all the privileges of Christians, upon the mere condition of believing in Jesus as the Messiah, or a messenger from God, without submit-

ting to circumcision and the ritual of Moses. It is written in your Scriptures: "And Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him for righteousness." Now, says he, if you will observe the history, you will perceive, that this is said of him before he received the rite of circumcision. Moreover, the tradition was universal with the Jews, that Abraham, before his call by God, had been an idolater, but repented of his idolatry and worshipped the true God. This fact, out of reverence for their great ancestor, is merely hinted at in the expression; "believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly." God forgave him because he immediately believed in him, and trusted his promises as soon as he made himself known. Here then was Abraham, the great founder of their nation, when God first made himself known to him, precisely in the condition of the Pagan converts to Christianity. They had been idolaters, so had he. They believed God speaking to them through Christ, and he believed God speaking to him by direct communication. Abraham was received immediately into Divine favor on account of his faith, and so ought these converts to be received into the Christian church. He received circumcision afterwards, so that ordinance was not the cause of the Divine favor, but the consequence of it. So far from being the cause of Divine acceptance, it was only the seal of the Divine favor bestowed on account of faith. Faith

and repentance then, lay as much at the foundation of the old dispensation as the 'new. Nothing more therefore, ought to be required of the converts from Paganism. "Even as David," says he, "also describeth the blessedness of the man unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works;" that is, on the ground of repentance and forgiveness. "Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord doth not impute sin." "Cometh this blessing then upon the circumcision only, or upon the uncircumcision also, for we say that faith was reckoned unto Abraham for righteousness," that is counted by God as the ground of Divine favor. "How then was it reckoned, when he was in circumcision, or in uncircumcision? Not in circumcision, but in uncircumcision. And he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had, being yet uncircumcised, that he might be the father of all them that believe, though they be not circumcised, that righteousness may be imputed to them also, and he become the father of circumcision to them who are not of the circumcision only, but also, who walk in the steps of that faith of Abraham which he had, being yet uncircumcised."

Such is the ingenuity of Paul's argumentation to commend to the Jews from their own Scriptures the truth which he knew to be certain from Divine

authority, that the Gentiles were to be admitted into the Christian church on the ground of their belief in Jesus as the Christ alone, without submitting to the laws of Moses.

Faith in Christ then, we perceive to have been the only bond by which the Christian church were bound to God, and to each other. The seal of that faith was baptism, and its standing pledge, participation in the Lord's supper.

It is of considerable importance to us to settle in our minds what that faith in Christ, which was the bond of the early church and which was the instrument of salvation, included. In order to ascertain this, it will be necessary to go back to the Apostolic testimony, and that of Christ himself. That we saw, in a preceding lecture, bore only on the office of Christ. It had nothing to do with his nature at all. The ground upon which he claimed the faith and obedience of the world was, that God had sent him; "This is life eternal, that they might know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent." "O righteous Father, the world hath not known thee, but I have known thee, and these have known that thou hast sent me." "Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word, that they all may be one, as thou Father art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us, that the world may believe that thou



hast sent me." This then, according to his solemn address to God, was the point and substance of faith in him, that God had sent him, and that all that he had taught in the name of God was true. This was the faith which had sanctified his disciples. "I have given them the words which thou gavest me, and they have received them, and have known surely that I came out from thee, and they have believed that thou didst send me." To believe that Jesus was sent by God, gives him the highest of all possible authority, for it makes his words the words of God. Obedience to the words of Christ is necessarily salvation. "If a man keep my saying," said he, "he shall never see death." "He that heareth my word, and believeth on him, that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation, but hath passed from death unto life." You perceive then, that it does not make the least difference as to saving faith in Christ, what his metaphysical rank and nature was, for he does not teach on his own authority, but on the authority of God. He does not claim the belief and obedience of mankind because he was this or that, but because God sent him. Nothing whatever is gained by defining his nature and rank at all. That is an opinion about Christ, not faith in Christ. For if you could prove him to hold any rank whatever in the universe, it would not prove him to have any relation to us, except you proved at the same

time that God sent him to be our teacher and Saviour. He himself has declared in substance, that his physical relations to the universe are of no importance. It is his doctrines which regenerate the world. "The flesh profiteth nothing. The words that I speak unto you, they are spirit and they are life." The faith in Christ then, which sanctifies the soul of the Christian, is not the belief that he is this or that metaphysically, that is an opinion about Christ, but that which confides in him, whatever he might have been, as having been sent by God to instruct and save the world. And it is fallaciously thought by some, that only assume a certain metaphysical rank for Jesus, and the truth of all he said follows of course, and the easiest way to prove Christianity, is to assume a certain metaphysical rank for Jesus, and any other view of the matter, is the half-way house to infidelity. But such people do not reflect, that instead of facilitating the proof of the truth of Christianity, they throw that proof one step farther back. For in order to make that metaphysical rank prove the truth of Christianity, it is necessary to prove that metaphysical rank itself. That is not a subject of direct teaching, but only of remote, incidental inference. He did not claim the faith of mankind on that ground. The credentials which he brought with him did not bear on that point. They did not prove him to be this or that metaphysically, but they did

prove that God had sent him, "for no man could do the miracles which he did, except God were with him." Miracles were the appropriate proof of what he was officially, but no proof of what he was by nature. If Christ is to be believed on account of his nature, and his miracles have no bearing on his nature, then his nature, even if it could be shown that he made any assertion about it, must be taken to be this or that, on his own assertion, and his assertion must rest at last on miracles, the same authority as his teaching about other things; "If I do not the works of my Father, believe me not. But if I do, though ye believe not me, believe the works." Nothing is gained then by asserting any peculiar nature as the basis of belief in Christ, but rather a new link is added to the chain of proof, which only makes it longer, without adding to its strength, as it must be fastened on miracles at last. The miracles prove him to be sent of God, let him be what he might, and we have God's authority for all that he taught in the name of God. We could have no more, let him be proved to be any thing whatever.

There is another view which has been taken of this matter, to which I cannot forbear here to advert, which says, in effect, that Christ is to be believed, not for what he was by nature, nor for the miracles which God wrought by him, but because what he taught strikes our minds as true. This, in my judg-

ment, is a much greater and more dangerous mistake than that to which I have already adverted. To my mind it abases Christianity from a religion into a philosophy, and the doctrines of Christ from the heaven-authenticated standard of religious truth, into the opinions of Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus sinks from the son or sent of God, and Saviour of the world, into the great philosopher of the Jews. His claim to a divine mission, and the institutions which he established to perpetuate his teaching, must, on this hypothesis, be regarded as a well intentioned and pious fraud,—but still a fraud, to give what he thought to be truth more universal reception and more lasting influence than it could have had, had it rested on mere human authority. His whole enterprise will rest on the same ground with the attempt of Numa to introduce his laws, which he believed would be salutary to the Romans, on pretence of divine revelation from the nymph Egeria in the grove of Aricia.

This discussion, which has sprung up in our own day, carries us back to the form of baptism, which was the creed of the early Christians, and shows us the propriety of that form which seems at first sight somewhat enigmatical and mysterious. They were baptized into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, in a profession of belief in one God, the Father Almighty, and into a belief in the Son,—Son, we have already seen to be an official

title, expressing a belief in Jesus therefore, as the sent of God,—still this profession of faith would be imperfect, in a Christian sense, because a man might profess all this, and yet say that he meant that Jesus was sent of God, just as Socrates and Plato were sent to propagate what they thought true. The third article therefore, was necessary to complete the Christian creed: “I believe in the Holy Ghost,” that Jesus was miraculously sent to establish a religion, to teach and to save mankind. The third article, therefore, establishes a connexion between the first and second, which clothes Jesus with the authority of God, gives us full confidence in all that he taught, and in the obedience which that faith produces, makes him “able to save to the uttermost, all that come unto God through him.”

Such was the faith, which was the bond of unity, and the instrument of salvation to the Christian Church. As long as the church confined itself to the simple testimony of the Apostles as to the office of Jesus, that he was the sent or anointed of God, and let opinion and speculation wander where they might as to his nature, so long the universal church had peace and unity. But soon speculative minds, with an infatuated and perverted ingenuity, began to turn their attention to the nature instead of the office of Jesus, to take the expression “Son of God,” in a metaphysical instead of an official sense. When the

flood-gates of speculation were once set open, every possible variety of opinion was formed and expressed. Jesus was placed in every grade of rank in the universe, from simple humanity up to supreme divinity. This would have done no essential injury, if they had held these speculations merely as matters of opinion, and had left the creed of the church to stand as it was, in the form of baptism. But the evil was, that these speculators insisted on forcing their opinions on the church universal, and inserting them into the creed. Arius arose and said, that "Son of God" meant, that Jesus was derived from God before all worlds, but, of course, that he began to exist. Athanasius arose and said, that Arius should not stay in the church, because he refused to assent to his hypothesis, that as Jesus was the Logos, or reason, or word, or wisdom of God, he must have always existed in him, though there was a time when he took a personal form. Thus the whole Christian church was lighted up into a controversy which had no more to do with Christianity than it had with the religion of the Hindoos. The whole Christian church was assembled to legislate about this matter. Athanasius prevailed, and procured to be inserted into the creed of the church, once so simple in the form of baptism, such strange phraseology as this: "We believe in one God the Father Almighty, the Maker of all things, visible and invisible, and in one

Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, begotten of the Father, only begotten, that is, of the substance of the Father, God out of God, Light out of Light, very God out of very God, begotten, not made, of the same substance with the Father," &c. &c. Such was the creed which the Council of Nice, in the year three hundred and twenty-five, substituted in the place of the form of baptism, the original creed, and imposed upon the Christian church. From that moment the unity of the church was rent. No tongue can tell, no mind can imagine the evil that it has caused in the church; the controversies, the divisions, the alienation, the heart-burnings, the miseries which it has occasioned from that day to this. Besides interpolating into the Christian creed elements entirely foreign to it, it introduced the dangerous precedent of bringing human authority to invade the sacred prerogative of Christ himself, of prescribing the terms of admission into his church. If any man, or set of men, like Athanasius or the Nicene Council, might put their peculiar dogmas into the creed of the Christian church, so might any other man or set of men, till that creed may be swelled to any number of articles, till every disputed opinion in physics, ethics and metaphysics, might be put into it, and forced upon men's consciences on pain of exclusion from the church.

The unity of the church, so long broken, can never be restored till men learn to distinguish between saving faith in Christ, and speculative opinions about Christ, that saving faith in Christ has nothing to do with his nature, but only embraces his official relations to God and us, as the Mediator between God and man; that speculative opinions concerning his rank and nature have no necessary connexion with the religion he taught whatever. There can be no unity in the church until the Christian creed is restored to its Apostolic simplicity, and made to embrace the testimony of the original witnesses and no more. "How God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power, who went about doing good, healing all manner of diseases, for God was with him." True faith in Christ in his official capacity, necessarily saves the soul, because it induces obedience to him as a teacher sent of God, and he that obeys Christ is necessarily saved. But speculative opinions about the nature and rank of Christ are of no advantage whatever, let them place him at any conceivable point from simple humanity up to supreme divinity.

There is one more view of this subject, which I consider it my solemn duty as a minister of the Gospel to unfold. Belief in Jesus in his official capacity, as a teacher sent by God, establishes a new relation between God and the human soul. That moment



you become convinced in your mind of the truth of the testimony of the Apostles concerning Jesus of Nazareth, you become possessed of certain immense and unspeakable advantages. His teachings quicken your religious sensibilities, they give force, definitiveness, and authority to the law written on the heart. They waken a penitence for transgression, and an abhorrence of sin, which the light of nature never produces. They propose the terms of the Divine forgiveness in a manner so distinct and direct, as to leave the mind which is oppressed with guilt at no loss how to seek relief and absolution. His practical instructions cover the whole ground of human duty. Not only so, as the Mediator, he brings us nearer to God than we could approach through the teachings of nature. As seen through nature, God is a dim, far off, and voiceless Being. "We go forward but we see him not, and backward but we cannot perceive him. Such knowledge is too wonderful for us. It is high; we cannot attain unto it." But in the teachings of Jesus, he is brought near to us. He becomes an object of clearer conception and stronger affection, as "Our Father in heaven," and when we repeat the words of Christ's inimitable prayer, we can throw ourselves as it were into the arms of his love. The moment you give full credence to the testimony of the Apostles, concerning Jesus of Nazareth, the future to your view is altogether changed.

The grave then becomes to you no longer the dark termination of human expectations. The world beyond becomes no longer a land of shadows and darkness, but faith in Jesus pours upon it a flood of day, shows it to be wide as immensity, more beautiful than eye hath seen, or imagination conceived, and in its duration measured only by the years of eternity.

But it must be remembered on the other hand, that the possession of this light, and these superior advantages, involves a corresponding amount of responsibility and obligation. Possessing these, from the very nature of things, it becomes impossible for you to sin, or even to be merely indifferent to religion, with the same degree of guilt you would have incurred had you never possessed them. The moment you believe in the divine mission of Christ, then every word of his Gospel becomes a message from God to your soul, and puts you on your allegiance to your Creator, whether you will obey or disobey it. It makes no sort of difference whether you make an open profession of your allegiance to God through Christ or not, your obligation depends upon your conviction, and not upon your acknowledgment of the conviction. The words of Jesus, wherever you hear them, judge your soul, and you must be miserable in sin just in proportion to the clearness and strength of your convictions of duty. Faith in Christ then involves its penalties, as well as its privileges, and

every precept of the Gospel to which you listen in this sacred place, while it enables you more effectually to seek for glory, honor, and immortality, increases the indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish which must finally come upon every soul of man that doeth evil. I counsel every one that hears me this night to consider diligently these things, lest that come upon you which is written, "ye shall begin to stand without and knock at the door, saying, Lord, Lord open unto us : and he shall answer and say unto you ; I know you not whence ye are. Then shall ye begin to say, we have eaten and drunk in thy presence, and thou hast taught in our streets. But he shall say, I tell you, I know you not, whence ye are, depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity." "For not the hearers of the law are justified before God, but only the doers of the law are justified."

## Lecture XV.

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### EPISTLE TO THE HEBREWS.

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HEBREWS 8: 1, 2.—Now of the things which we have spoken, this is the sum. We have such a high priest who is set on the right hand of the Majesty in the heavens; a minister of the sanctuary and of the true tabernacle, which the Lord hath pitched and not man.

THE Epistle to the Hebrews, though the most complete in its plan, the most connected in its structure, and the most finished in its composition, is the least understood of any of the books of the New Testament. It is addressed to opinions, sentiments, prejudices, and traditions, which then had an existence, but are now forever passed away. As it is impossible for us to put ourselves in the place of those to whom it was addressed, to stand where they stood, to think as they thought, and to feel as they felt, it is impossible for us to realize its beauty, its ingenuity, and its force. Its authorship is altogether uncertain. There is nothing in the Epistle itself to fix it on any one known to us in the history of the Apostolic age.

There is a passage in it which would seem to show, that it was written by some one standing in the same relation to the Apostles with the Evangelist Luke, that is, of a hearer or companion of the Apostles. Luke says, in the beginning of his Gospel: "Forasmuch as many have taken in hand to set forth in order, a declaration of those things which are most surely believed among us, even as they delivered them unto us, who from the beginning were eye witnesses and ministers of the word." The writer of the Epistle says: "Therefore ought we to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we let them slip. How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation, which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him." Of course the writer was not one of the original twelve, and seems to stand here only on the authority of a hearer of the Apostles.

The time when it was written is defined to be before the destruction of Jerusalem, for in the eighth chapter it is said: "For if he were on earth he would not be a priest, seeing that there are priests that offer gifts according to the law." It was probably not long before that event, for it is said in the tenth chapter: "Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as ye see

the day approaching;" those great civil convulsions coming on in Palestine, which Christ had prophesied were to precede the breaking up of the old economy, and the introduction of the new.

It was addressed, as the name and every thing about it import, to the Jewish converts in the Christian church, particularly, I think, to those living in Palestine, to guard them against abandonment of Christianity, and relapse into their old faith. There were some causes in that age, which rendered them peculiarly liable to such defection. The religion of Jesus was then in its infancy. It had not the dignity which it has since acquired by ages of existence, and millions of disciples, numbering among them hosts of the most exalted characters of all time, and the brightest ornaments of human nature. The veneration of the world, excited by Christ's spiritual greatness, had not yet consecrated the cross as the symbol of heroic suffering, and man's salvation. It was a cross still, the emblem of all that was vile, and it communicated something of its infamy to that pure being, who was one day to plant it among the holiest things of earth.

The Jewish people and religion were still in existence, their temple service, a splendid ritual, was still celebrated, apparently recognized by God as a religion yet sanctioned by him. Then there was national pride, ready to be kindled by every circum-

stance of their history as the chosen people of God, the giving of the law by the most stupendous divine manifestations, the personal and official greatness of Moses ; the splendor and dignity of the Aaronic priesthood, and the temple service ; the immediate and palpable communion with God, into which they were brought by the sacrificial rites ; the assurance which they thus obtained of the pardon of sin, which is under all dispensations the great burden of this life. Christianity at first contrasted but ill with this outward magnificence. Its greatness was spiritual and inward. Its author, both in disposition and appearance, had been the humblest of the sons of men. His followers and Apostles had been men of an origin equally obscure with his own. And to all human appearance he had fallen vanquished before that very power which he had attempted to supersede. It was to be expected therefore, that the Jewish converts to Christianity, particularly in Palestine, should sometimes cast back a longing, lingering look to their old religion, and some of weaker faith and more wavering principles, relapse from their allegiance to Christ to the institutions of Moses.

To guard against this, is the whole purpose of the Epistle to the Hebrews. It is its object to run a parallel between Judaism and Christianity, the religion delivered to the fathers by the prophets, and that promulgated and established through the Mes-

siah, to give the facts and truths of Christianity a dignity and glory which might rival all the boasts of the followers of Moses. It was a tradition of the Jews derived, as is supposed, from a Rabbinic commentary on a passage in Isaiah; "My servant shall be exalted and be very high;" that the Messiah should be greater than Moses, greater than Abraham, and greater than the ministering angels; and it is supposed by some that it is with reference to this gradation that our Saviour says: "Of that day and hour knoweth no one, no, not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father only." The author of this Epistle, a learned Hebrew scholar has well observed, seems to have planned his treatise so as precisely to cover the ground of this tradition, changing only the name of Abraham for that of Aaron, which made it more opportune for his purpose. The writer intends to show that these expectations were fulfilled in Jesus of Nazareth, the person whom they had received as the Messiah. Such is the plan of the Epistle, and it is preserved with systematic precision. The establishment of each point he follows up with an appropriate exhortation founded upon it. If Jesus, the Messiah, the person through whom we have received the new dispensation, be greater than the angels by whom the Jews received the old, then "we ought to give the greater heed to the things which are spoken." If greater



than Moses, then there is a rest to which he is leading us, and we must not fall away through unbelief, as did some of the Israelites, and died in the wilderness. If he is a priest of a higher order than that of Aaron, then ought we to come with more confidence and constancy to the throne of grace.

The method of proof is not what would be esteemed in these days logical, but it was such as the Jews were accustomed to use, and more adapted to impress their minds than any train of philosophical reasoning. He begins by showing Christ's superiority to angels. This was necessary, as the Jews considered their law to have been given by the intervention of angels. The theology of the Jews was too pure, especially in the later ages, to suppose that the Divine appearances related in the Old Testament were actually God himself; they spoke of them, therefore, as angels of God. Stephen tells the Jews, that they "received the law by the disposition of angels, but had not kept it." Paul says, that it "was ordained by angels in the hand of a mediator," that is, Moses. Stephen says, moreover, that it was an angel of God which appeared to Moses in the bush: "And when forty years were expired, there appeared to him an angel of God in a flame of fire in a bush." This idea of the law being given by the ministry of angels, seems to be alluded to in the sixty-eighth Psalm, or perhaps founded on it; "The

chariots of God are twenty thousand, even thousands of angels, the Lord is among them as in Sinai, in the holy place."

The first two chapters are taken up in proving that Jesus the Messiah is greater than the angels, because a higher title is given him, and greater things are said of him than the angels, in the Scriptures of the Old Testament. He is called the "Son of God." For although the angels are called "sons of God," no particular one is thus addressed. It is not an empty title, for there is a species of heirship attached to it, the dominion of the world being promised to the Messiah. He resembles God more than the angels, in what he is employed by God to do. He possessed extensive control over physical nature by his word, and was used as the instrument in producing an entire change in the whole condition of the world, putting an end to the Mosaic, and introducing the Christian dispensation, a thing which God has not submitted to the ministration of angels. He is exalted above the angels in being placed at God's right hand. He is greater than the angels, inasmuch as God has promised to be to him a Father. He is superior to the angels in the permanence of his existence. The Scripture says with reference to the angels, that God makes winds and lightnings his angels, which exist but for a moment and then pass away. But with respect to the Messiah it says, God has estab-

lished his throne forever, that God who has laid the foundations of the earth and made the heavens, and will one day sweep them away with all that they contain, angels among the rest.

“God, who at sundry times and in divers manners, spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son;” that is, the Messiah, whom, as a Son, “he hath appointed heir of all things,” in allusion to the second Psalm, from which all the phraseology of the Sonship of the Messiah is derived: “Ask of me, and I will give thee the heathen for an inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for a possession;” “by whom also he made the worlds.” This phrase is ambiguous. The word rendered worlds has the same ambiguity as the English word by which it is translated. Sometimes it means the material world, but most generally periods of time, or dispensations of religion; just as we say, the ancient and the modern world. By some it is thought to assert, that God made the material world by the instrumentality of the Logos, or Divine nature of Christ; others think that the authority of this very Epistle is against this interpretation, for in the eleventh chapter, where the creation of the material universe is referred to, God is said to have made it without any intervention. “Through faith we know that the worlds were framed by the word *ρηματι* of God;” that is, by his

immediate command. At any rate, there is no stress laid upon it in this argument, for if that had been the meaning, that Jesus the Messiah was the creator of the material universe, the whole thing would have been settled at once, without any further proof. "Who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person," making as a son the greatest display in his own person, that the world has ever seen, of God's wisdom, power, and love, "and controlling all things by the word of his power," possessing supernatural control over the elements in the miracles which he wrought; "when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high, being made so much better than the angels, as he hath obtained a more excellent name than they. For unto which of the angels said he at any time, Thou art my son, this day have I begotten thee?" The Psalm from which this is taken, whatever may have been the occasion on which it was composed, was universally interpreted by the Jews to relate to the Messiah. "And again, I will be to him a Father, and he shall be to me a Son." This quotation is from second Samuel, seventh chapter, fourteenth verse, and was spoken by Nathan the prophet to David, concerning Solomon. "And when thy days be fulfilled, I will set up thy seed after thee, and I will establish his kingdom for ever, he shall build a house for my name. I will be to him a father,

and he shall be to me a son." It was however, applied by the Jews to the Messiah. The next quotation is not found in the Hebrew Bible, though it is found in the Greek translation, from which all the quotations in this Epistle are made, and which was in fact the common Bible of those who spoke the Greek language. It occurs between the forty-second and forty-third verses of the thirty-second chapter of Deuteronomy. "And again, when he bringeth in the first begotten into the world, he saith, And let all the angels of God worship him." "And of the angels the Scripture saith; Who maketh the winds his angels; or messengers, and flames of fire, that is thunderbolts, his ministers." That is to say, so far from the angels being any thing very exalted or permanent, inanimate things, such as winds and tempests, are called by that name. "But of the Son," that is, the Messiah, the Scripture saith, "God is thy throne for ever and ever; the sceptre of thy kingdom is a right sceptre, thou lovest righteousness and hatest iniquity; therefore God, even thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows." In the original Psalm in Hebrew, this is an address to a king, and the word rendered God, is the same which is applied to magistrates, and ought there to be rendered, O king. The Greek translators, whose version the author of this Epistle used, feeling, as we may suppose, the difficulty of addressing any being as God, who was anointed by God with the oil of

gladness above his fellows, rendered the word in the nominative case, instead of the vocative, which makes the passage read thus: "God is thy throne for ever and ever," a rendering which makes it much more apposite to the argument of this writer, because he wishes to contrast the permanence of the Messiah with the more uncertain fate of the angels. For, says he, the Scripture speaks on this wise: "Thou Lord, in the beginning, hast laid the foundation of the earth, and the heavens are the work of thy hands. They shall perish, but thou remainest, and they all shall wax old as doth a garment, and as a vesture shalt thou fold them up, and they shall be changed, but thou art the same, and thy years shall not fail." That is, God has promised to sustain the throne of the Messiah for ever; but the heavens, the very habitation of the angels, shall wax old, and he will fold them up and sweep them away. "But to which of the angels said he at any time, Sit on my right hand until I make thine enemies thy footstool? Are they not all ministering spirits sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation." To sit at the right hand of God, as the eldest son of a king is accustomed to do at the right hand of his father, is certainly more honorable than to be employed like servants going hither and thither to minister to the welfare of men, even the best of men.

Here the writer closes the proof of his first thesis,

that Jesus the Messiah, through whom mankind have received from God the new dispensation, is greater than the angels, through whom the Jews believed their fathers had received the old. Christianity therefore, is more dignified in its origin than Judaism, notwithstanding the stupendous manifestations of Divine power at its promulgation. He immediately proceeds to apply this inference to the practical purpose of the whole Epistle, to dissuade the Jewish converts from apostasy. "Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest, at any time, we let them slip. For if the word spoken by angels was steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense of reward, how shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation, which first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by those who heard him, God also bearing them witness both by signs and wonders, and with divers miracles and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his own will. For unto the angels hath he not put in subjection the world to come whereof we speak;" that is, the new world or state of things, which God created or brought about by the Messiah.

But here a passage of the Old Testament occurs to his mind, which might be brought as an objection to his argument. Jesus, the Messiah, was a man, and man is thought to rank lower than angels, and the

Scripture expressly says as much. "But one in a certain place testified, saying: What is man that thou art mindful of him, or the son of man that thou visitest him. Thou madest him a little lower than the angels, thou crownest him with glory and honor, and didst set him over the works of thy hands; thou hast put all things in subjection under his feet." The latter part of this quotation, he would say, carries an antidote to the former, for he argues: "For in that he put all things in subjection to him, he left nothing that is not put under him;" then angels among the rest. This assertion we do not see to be fulfilled in relation to man in general. "But now we see not yet all things put under him." It is more reasonable therefore, to make this assertion to apply to the Messiah, and be fulfilled by his exaltation in consequence of his death. "But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels, for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honor, that by the grace of God he should taste of death for every man." Here, by one master stroke of rhetoric, and that apparently incidental, the scandal of the cross, which was to the Jews a stumbling block, and to the Greeks foolishness, is removed, and the death of Jesus redeemed from infamy, and made honorable and glorious by being shown to be necessary to the office he sustains, and beneficial to every individual. As it was necessary for the Jewish high priest to be a man, to act for



and with his brethren, and thus to sanctify them ceremonially, so it was necessary that the Messiah should be a man to sanctify them spiritually, that he might act on them through sympathy, and especially, by passing unharmed through death into the spiritual world, demonstrate that spiritual world to the faith of man, and thus redeem men from the fear of death. "For it became him," that is, God, "for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons to glory, to make the Captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings;" that is, by death, not perfect as a man or moral agent, but perfect as a leader or captain, to enable him to go before us through death to a better world. He then goes on to cite various passages from the Scriptures to prove that the Messiah was to be a man. "For he that sanctifieth, and they that are sanctified, are all of one;" that is, one nature, one rank, one origin; "for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren, saying, I will declare thy name unto my brethren, in the midst of the church I will sing praises unto thee." This passage is quoted from the twenty-second Psalm, and is used by this writer to show that the Messiah was to have brethren, and of course was to be a man. "And again, I will put my trust in him." He sustains therefore, he would say, the same relation to God, as a dependent being, with any other of the human race. "And again, Behold I and the children which God

hath given me." These passages must have been applied by those to whom this writer addressed himself, to the Messiah, or they could have no force in this argument, and they are brought forward as conclusive, to prove that he was to be a man. He then goes on to state the reasons why he was a man. "Forasmuch then, as children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same, that through death he might destroy him that had the powers of death, that is, the devil, and deliver them who through fear of death, were all their lifetime subject to bondage. For verily he did not undertake the cause of angels, but the seed of Abraham, wherefore, in all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God to make reconciliation for the sins of the people. For in that he himself hath suffered, being tempted, he is able to succor them that are tempted." Here, it is pleasing to see, that this writer, though he could run such an ingenious parallel, and in some respects fanciful, between Christianity and Judaism, had at the bottom the same views of Christ's mission, sufferings, and death, as we all entertain;—that he came to sanctify us, to deliver us from sin, and give us a sure hope of immortality.

The next thesis, that Christ was superior to Moses, he despatches in few words. The argument here

turns upon the distinction between son and servant, and in and over. God, on the occurrence of the quarrel of Aaron and Miriam with Moses, calls Moses his servant: "My servant Moses is not so." But the Messiah is called God's son, "Wherefore," he proceeds, "holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our profession, Jesus Christ, who was faithful unto him that appointed him, even as Moses was faithful in all his house. For this man was counted worthy of more glory than Moses, inasmuch as he who hath builded the house hath more honor than the house." The word house is ambiguous, signifying both house and family. "For every house is builded by some one, but he that built all things is God. And Moses verily was faithful in all his house as a servant, for a testimony of those things which were to be spoken after;" so as to give assurance that he gave truly the oracles of God. "But Christ as a son over his own house, whose house we are, if we hold fast the confidence and rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end." If Moses was a servant, then he only belonged to the family of God. But if Christ was a son, then he was over the family of God, to which family all true Christians belong, if they persevere and do not apostatize from the faith.

The remainder of this chapter and the next, is taken up with the exhortation founded upon the

superiority of Christ to Moses, which he considers himself to have proved. If Christ be greater than Moses, then rebellion against his authority must be much more atrocious than the rebellion of the Israelites against Moses in the wilderness, for which they were rejected by God and condemned to leave their bones in the desert. He goes on to argue from the Old Testament that there is still a rest for the people of God, to which Christ is leading them; for it is said in the Psalms, "To-day, if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts as in the day of provocation in the wilderness." Now this was long after the Israelites had taken possession of their rest in the land of Canaan. So there must still be rest for the people of God, to which Christ is leading us. Take heed therefore, says he, lest any of you come short.

The third thesis is, that Jesus the Messiah is greater than Aaron, and the order of the Jewish hierarchy. The skill and ingenuity with which this is proved is worthy of all admiration. It was the most important to his whole purpose, because the danger of their relapse into Judaism arose mainly from the imposing nature of the priesthood, the services and the temple at Jerusalem. The difficulty of proving Jesus to be a priest at all was not inconsiderable, for he was of the tribe of Judah and not of Levi. He officiated in no temple, he belonged to no succession, he performed no priestly rite. The most that

could be said of it was, that his death bore some distant analogy to a sacrifice, not literally indeed, for then it would have been the most shocking thought that could enter the human mind, that God could be pleased by a human sacrifice, and propitiated by the most inhuman murder. The cross would have been the altar, and the brutal soldiers the priests. But there was a figurative sense, and that a most important one, in which Christ sacrificed himself for the salvation of man, inasmuch as death was incidental to his office, and overtook him in consequence of its faithful performance. Accordingly this analogy is often used by the other writers of the New Testament. But this is not the view of the subject taken by the author of this Epistle. The scene of his offering is not laid on earth, but in heaven itself.

There was an idea of the Jews, founded on the fortieth verse of the fifteenth chapter of Exodus, that their tabernacle and afterwards the temple, was made after the model of heaven itself; for God there says to Moses, "Look that thou make them after their pattern which was shown unto thee in the mount." The Rabbins who invented, refined upon this idea, and made Jerusalem itself an image of heaven, to which there are frequent allusions in the New Testament under the title of the heavenly Jerusalem, &c. They even went so far as to compare the three apartments of their temple to the three

heavens. The outer court or court of the Gentiles, corresponded to the lowest heavens, between the earth and the skies; the second or court of Israel, with the second heavens, between the sky and the stars; the third apartment or the holy of holies, to the third heavens, the immediate residence of God himself. There, it was supposed, was an altar and other things like the furniture of the temple, of more magnificent proportions and exquisite materials. This was the temple into which Christ entered when he ascended to heaven.

The attempt to prove Jesus to have been greater than Aaron, and the Levitical priesthood, or even a priest at all, was a task somewhat difficult. But there was a passage in one of the Psalms, which the Jews thought applicable to the Messiah, which was precisely to his purpose. It is the one hundred and tenth, and as far as can be collected from the Psalm itself, was composed by one of the subjects of David on the occasion of his taking Jerusalem from the Jebusites, and making it the capital of his kingdom; a city which was once the seat of that king and priest, Melchisedek, in whom, as in early times, the two offices were united. The composer of the Psalm seems to celebrate David as his successor, and to transfer to him the dignity of his priestly office. God had promised David that he would establish his throne forever. Combining the two ideas, the writer

of the Psalm makes God, by a bold Orientalism, to have sworn to David, "Thou art a priest forever after the order of Melchisedek." The writer goes on to apply this to Christ, and in order to do this, refines upon the word "forever," and the fact that there is no genealogy given of Melchisedek in the Scriptures. It is not said when he was born, or when he died, and he may be said therefore, by a kind of verbal subtilty, which was very common in Jewish reasoning, to abide a high priest continually, and so to resemble Jesus, inasmuch as he having sacrificed himself once for all, is forever with God in his temple in the heavens. Moreover, says he, since this promise was made after the establishment of the Levitical priesthood, it signified that that priesthood was to be done away. For if the Levitical priesthood was perfect, then it would not be necessary that it should be superseded. This however, is aside from the main purpose.

But how was Christ, as a priest after the order of Melchisedek, to be proved to be superior to Aaron and the Levitical priesthood? Abraham, the Scripture says, paid tythes to Melchisedek, and was blessed by him. The less is blessed by the greater, therefore Melchisedek was greater than Abraham. And Levi, who was descended from Abraham, may be said to have been in Abraham at the time, and thus to have paid tythes to Melchisedek. Christ then, who was

of the order of Melchisedek, must be superior to Levi and all his descendants, superior to Aaron and all the Jewish hierarchy.

The priesthood of Christ being thus established after the order of Melchisedek, that is a perpetual priesthood, and the temple in which he ministers proved to be heaven itself, he goes on further to draw a parallel between the function of the Jewish high priest and that of Christ, much to the advantage of the latter. The Jewish high priest went once a year into the holy of holies, and sprinkled blood upon the mercy seat, to signify the penitence of the people and the forgiveness of God, but not before he had sacrificed for his own sins. But Christ did something far greater. He went pure and spotless into heaven itself, having shed his own blood, and presented himself before God. The Jewish high priest had to offer once a year, but Christ by his immortal spirit, which ever liveth to make intercession, is truly after the order of Melchisedek, and abideth a high priest forever, inasmuch as he is exalted to the right hand of God.

Such then are the arguments by which the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews would establish the superiority of Christianity to Judaism, and thereby dissuade the converts from that religion from relapsing into their former faith. As if he had said: "Let them boast that their religion was received from God



by angels, we received ours from God by a person whom he dignifies by calling him his Son, in whom Divine perfections preeminently shone, and of whom greater things are spoken than of the angels themselves. Let them boast of Moses; he was called a servant in God's household, Christ as the Son is over the household. Let them boast of Aaron and the Levitical priesthood, of the temple, its magnificence and its sacred rites. Jesus is a priest of a higher order, even the order of Melchisedek, which is an eternal priesthood. In their little temple at Jerusalem, which is a mere miniature and slight representation of the true one, the high priest goes once a year after having sacrificed for his own sins, to signify the pardon of sin, and soon he himself will pass away and be succeeded by another. But Jesus, having shed his own blood for human salvation, went into heaven itself, the true holy of holies, and by his immortal spirit, forever offers himself to God, and intercedes for man.

He follows up the whole with the practical conclusion and exhortation founded upon it. "And having a high priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a true heart, in full assurance of faith; let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering."

Such were the arguments which were best adapted to Jewish habits of thought and reasoning, in the

time of the Apostles, to prove to them the superiority of Christianity to Judaism, a truth of which we can entertain no doubt, without any reasoning. Thus the great truths of Christianity were veiled in a Jewish dress, the more effectually to commend them to the ancient people of God. We need no allegorical comparison to convince us that Christ is superior to Moses, and Christianity more excellent than Judaism; and were we to attempt to prove the same proposition, we should appeal to proofs of a more logical and spiritual nature, derived from the essential elements and objects of both; but in so doing, we should consult the wants and condition of our own age, rather than those of the age of the Apostles. To us, the truths which are taught in this Epistle, are equally dear as to the Christians of the first ages,—the new covenant, the doctrines of Jesus sealed by his blood; the assurance of pardon to the penitent which his death confirmed; the deliverance from bondage through the fear of death, which his resurrection achieved; the confidence we have in our devotions which we offer in his name, who is passed into the heavens, and ever liveth to make intercession for us; the hope that he hath kindled, which is as an anchor to the soul, sure and steadfast, and entereth within the veil;—these are the essentials of Christianity, equally precious under every form of representation.

With this understanding, the Epistle to the He-

brews, otherwise so dark and enigmatical, which has been made to teach doctrines so extravagant, and has laid the foundation of so much controversy in the church, becomes one of the most lucid, connected, and finished of the books of the New Testament. It appears what it professes to be, not a statement of the simple and fundamental principles of the Gospel,—these he avowedly passes over as milk calculated for babes,—but a parallel between Judaism and Christianity, calculated to strike and persuade a Jew, to elevate the humble origin of Christianity, to glorify the cross, the scandal of the seed of Abraham, and to show the followers of Jesus that though no land of Canaan awaited them, and they had no earthly temple like that at Jerusalem, there still remained a rest for the people of God, and a temple above, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.

## Lecture XVI.

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### EPISTLE TO THE ROMANS.

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**ROMANS 8: 1—4.**—There is therefore no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the spirit. For the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death. For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh, that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the spirit.

At how early a period the Jews became numerous at Rome we are not informed by history. The first notice we have of their existence in great numbers is in the year forty-eight before Christ. Within fifteen years from the capture of Jerusalem by Pompey, Cicero complains in a public oration for an officer who was accused of embezzling the money sent by the Jews of Asia Minor for the temple service, that the Jews had assembled about the forum in such numbers as to seem to overawe the court, and endanger the public peace. This was a full century, before the date of the Epistle of Paul to the Romans. In the meantime they increased in numbers and

respectability, notwithstanding the contempt that was poured upon them by the wits and poets of the city, and the cruel persecutions to which they were then exposed. It is curious to read the sentiments of this most enlightened and religious of the public men of Rome concerning the Jews and their religion, as it was in his consulship that the holy city fell under the dominion of that vast Republic. "Every state," says he, "has its own religion, we have ours. While Jerusalem was still safe, and the Jews enjoyed tranquillity, their religion and its rites were abhorrent to the splendor of this empire, the gravity of our name, and the institutions of our ancestors; now much more so, since they dared to set our power at defiance. How much the immortal gods care for them, is shown by the fact that they were conquered, carried away captive, and sold into slavery." Such were the sentiments of the most enlightened man of his age concerning the Jews. The singularity which brought odium upon them, seems to have been this, that they were the only people who had any deep and sincere reverence for their religion, the only people on whose daily life it had any power.

Pompey sent home multitudes of the Jews as slaves to Rome, and Josephus, a century later, tells us, that the consuls enlisted four thousand of them as soldiers at one time. As slaves, they were unprofitable, and gave their masters much trouble by their

invincible adherence to the usages and rites of their religion. They were, therefore, liberated in great numbers, and inhabited a part of the city by themselves. There they had their synagogues, and their worship on the sabbath days, to some an object of curiosity, to others of scorn. How the Gospel was first introduced among them, we are not told. That any of the Apostles had been there, is not probable. A church might have been established by mere immigration from those parts of the empire where there were churches already, for we read the names of more than twenty of Paul's acquaintances in the salutations at the close of this Epistle. He must have been known there by reputation, particularly as Priscilla and Aquila, with whom he lived at Corinth and Ephesus, afterwards returned to Rome, their former residence. It was natural that on rejoining their old friends and associates at the capital, they should spread the fame and the praises of the great Apostle to the Gentiles. Perhaps his friends, who were already there, gave him some intimation of the wants of that community. These could not be very different from those of other Christian churches, composed as they all were, out of Judea, of converts from the Jews and Gentiles. The transition from Judaism to Christianity was every where attended by the same difficulties. The very fact of proposing to them a new religion, was an offence to their pride, as it

implied the imperfection of the old. To the old, they were attached by habit, by reverence, and by suffering. But as things then were, it operated rather to pervert and obscure, than enlighten and perfect their moral conceptions. It led them to place holiness and sanctification rather in outward observances than in inward purity. They felt themselves a holy people more because they were descended from Abraham, observed circumcision, and abstained from swine's flesh and other forbidden food, than because they were internally any better than their neighbors,—were more pure, just, and humane. They looked upon the Pagan as polluted, more on account of his indiscriminate eating and his being a foreigner from the commonwealth of Israel, than his offences against the laws, which God hath written on all hearts. This was the righteousness which was by the law, that Paul so often found it necessary to combat and to discourage. This ceremonial and national righteousness, it was necessary for him to annihilate, not only to make them willing to receive the religion of Jesus, but to make them willing to receive it on equal terms with the Gentiles, and thus amalgamate with those whom they were accustomed to consider as polluted and vile. A new way to the favor of God had now been opened through belief in Jesus as the Messiah, and ambassador of God. The way to the Divine acceptance had before been through a

literal compliance with the laws of Moses, and the pardon of sin was provided for by the ceremonies of sacrifice. By the new religion, salvation was to be obtained by believing and obeying Christ, and God's readiness to pardon the penitent, had already been signified by the death of Jesus, which was the seal of his embassy of mercy to mankind. Sacrifice and offering were now no longer necessary, as all that had been meant by them had been signified once for all by the death of Christ; so that the Jew needed no longer look to the sacrifices that were going on in the temple as the evidence that the sins of which he had repented had been forgiven, but to the cross of Calvary, for Jesus had sealed with his blood the new covenant, a part of which, their own Scriptures assured them, was to be the forgiveness of sin.

To explain the connexion of the forgiveness of sin, with the death of Christ, it is necessary for us to go back to the principal prophecy of the new dispensation in the records of the old. In the thirty-first chapter of Jeremiah, there occurs this prediction: "Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah. Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers, in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt. But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel. After those days,



saith the Lord, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. And they shall teach no more every man his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, know the Lord, for they shall all know me from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the Lord, for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more." In the mission and Gospel of Christ, this prophecy was to the letter fulfilled. His teachings were the substitution of a spiritual law, appealing to men's consciences and moral sense, for the outward and ceremonial law. And as Moses, when he had read from the book of the covenant in the audience of the people, and they said, all that the Lord hath said we will do and be obedient, took blood and sprinkled it on the people, and said: "Behold, the blood of the covenant, which the Lord hath made with you concerning all these words;" so Christ when he had finished delivering the precepts of the New Covenant, took wine and said to his disciples: "This is the new covenant," not testament, as we have it in our translation, "in my blood, which is shed for many for the remission of sins." That is, as the blood which Moses sprinkled on the people, ratified the old covenant, so will my blood which I shall shed on the cross, ratify the new. A part of this covenant we have already seen, was the forgiveness of sin: "I

will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more." The blood of Christ then, was not the procuring cause of the pardon of sin, it only ratified the new covenant, a part of which was a promise of God to pardon sin. Faith then in the blood of Christ was faith in the mercy of God, of which that blood was a seal and an assurance. The provision for the pardon of sin under the new dispensation differed from that under the old, inasmuch as it seemed to be bestowed under the old in consequence, not of repentance alone, but the performance of certain rites, and was given therefore in a manner as a matter of debt. Under the old dispensation, the sinner offered the sacrifice by God's ordinance, and it signified his penitence and God's mercy. Under the new, man did nothing, but God himself set forth the symbol, so that it was altogether of grace. "Being justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God hath set forth," not man, "to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare the terms of the Divine acceptance in the forgiveness of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; to declare at this time his terms of forgiveness, that he is merciful and ready to pardon him that believeth in Jesus." Thus Christ is not a propitiatory offering made by man to God, but a symbol of mercy set forth by God to man. What man is required to do then, is to believe

that he is a symbol of mercy, to the penitent of course. The connexion of the death of Christ with the forgiveness of sin then, according to this Epistle, becomes the simplest and most intelligible thing in the world. Faith in the blood of Christ becomes faith in the mercy of God, of which his blood is the symbol and assurance. All ideas of a literal sacrifice are contradicted by the fact of God's having set forth Christ as a propitiation, otherwise it would amount to the strange proposition that God made a human sacrifice to appease himself.

It is observed in this Epistle, that Paul lays much stress on the fact, that the grace of God is free. The purpose of this is, to reduce the Jews and Gentiles to the same level. The danger was, that the Jews would assume a superiority over the Gentiles in the church, and consider themselves better than they on account of their former compliance with the ceremonial law, and imagine that the privileges of Christianity belonged to them of right. "Where is boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? of works? nay, but by the law of faith. Therefore, we conclude, that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law." Jew and Gentile are alike admitted into the new covenant on account of faith, or belief in Jesus.

I now proceed to an analysis of the Epistle. He begins by expressing his desire to see them, and

exercise his ministry among them to their mutual edification; that he had many times formed this design, but hitherto had been hindered. He considered himself a debtor to Greek and barbarian, the wise and the foolish, to preach the Gospel. For, says he, "I am not ashamed of the Gospel, for it is the power of God unto salvation, to the Jew first, and also to the Greek." The mention of these two elements of the church, the Jew and the Greek, hurries him into the main purpose of his Epistle, to show the application of the Gospel to both. "For the terms of Divine acceptance are revealed in it through faith to all who believe, as it is written, 'The justified by faith, shall live.' For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven, against all ungodliness and iniquity of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness."

All mankind have sinned, and stand in need of the Gospel, both as a scheme of pardon and reformation; and the essence of their guilt is, that they hold the truth in unrighteousness, that is, they do not act up to the light they have. To sin, three postulates are necessary, a knowledge of God as the foundation of obligation, a knowledge of right and wrong, and freedom to choose between them. These he shows to have been possessed both by Gentile and Jew. This knowledge was possessed by the heathen in the necessary convictions of natural religion, which made the favor of God equally attainable to all. "Be-

cause, that which may be known of God, is manifest to them, for God hath shown it to them. For the invisible things of him are clearly seen, being understood by the things which are made, even his eternal power and Godhead." This knowledge they voluntarily and corruptly relinquished, and substituted idolatry in its stead; which corrupting the fountain of true religion, became the source of endless corruption of morals and manners. Not only have they a sufficient knowledge of God to be the ground of religious obligation, but a moral discrimination between right and wrong is demonstrated to exist in every man, from the fact of his judging others. All mankind judge the conduct of others, and say that this is wrong, and that is right. No man can deny that he possesses this knowledge who condemns another, and therefore leaves himself without excuse. God's dealings with such a sinner are demonstrated to be just: "Therefore, thou art inexcusable, O man, whosoever thou art that judgest, for wherein thou judgest another thou condemnest thyself, for thou that judgest doest the same things. And we are sure that the judgment of God is according to truth against them which commit such things."

This is equally true of those who possess a revelation, and those who do not. "For when the Gentiles, who have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these having not the law, are a

law unto themselves, which show the work of the law written on their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts in the meantime accusing or else excusing one another." But in the meanwhile these endowments make the favor of God equally attainable by all, for he will judge every man by the light he has possessed, and reward every man according to his work,—“Who will render unto every man according to his deeds, to them who by patient continuance in well doing seek for glory, and honor, and immortality, eternal life; but unto them that are contentious and obey not the truth, but obey unrighteousness,” that is, having knowledge and freedom of choice, choose evil instead of good, “indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, on every soul of man that doeth evil; of the Jew first, and also of the Gentile. But glory, honor and peace to every man that worketh good, to the Jew first, and also to the Gentile. For there is no respect of persons with God.”

To this view of things, the Jew may be disposed to object on the ground of his being a Jew, and possessing superior knowledge of the will of God. To this the Apostle answers, that it is equally possible for them to abuse their light as the Gentiles, and a knowledge of the will of God does not always secure the practice of it. He goes on to illustrate this: “Behold, thou art called a Jew, and retest in the

law, and makest thy boast of God, and knowest his will, and approvest the things which are more excellent, being instructed out of the law, and art confident that thou thyself art a guide of the blind, a light of them which are in darkness. Thou, therefore, which teachest another, teachest thou not thyself? Thou that preachest a man should not steal, dost thou steal? Thou that makest thy boast of the law, through breaking the law, dishonorest thou God. For the name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles through you."

The objection would here naturally occur: If the Jews were no better than the heathen, it must be confessed that God had made a revelation in vain. This he answers by saying, that the possession of the divine oracles was a privilege, bestowed in perfect good faith by God. That they were unfaithful to their privileges, it was no fault of his. The goodness of God is always to be supposed. And it might be further objected, that if the faithfulness of God was only made the more conspicuous by the unfaithfulness of the Jews, why should they be punished for promoting the glory of God? This cannot be admitted without establishing the principle, that we may do evil that good may come, a sentiment worthy of all condemnation. "What advantage then hath the Jew, or what profit is there in circumcision? Much every way, chiefly because to them were com-

mitted the oracles of God. For what if some did not believe, shall their unbelief make the faith of God of none effect? God forbid, yea, let God be true, but every man a liar."

The contents of the remainder of the third and fourth chapters I have already analyzed in discoursing on another subject, the admission of the Gentiles into the Christian church.

The next chapter, the fifth, is one of the most obscure in the whole Bible. The most that I can do with it, at this time, is, to paraphrase its general drift. Having disposed of the past, the Apostle casts his eyes to the future. Having shown that the new dispensation makes ample provision for man as a sinner, that we have through Christ as ample ground for reliance on the mercy of God, as through the sacrifices of the old dispensation, he says: "Therefore, being justified by faith," by the new religion instead of the old, "we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." He then goes on to show, that the provision it makes for the future, is more ample than under the law, for it brings us equally near to God, and gives a brighter hope than any thing else affords; "By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in the hope of the glory of God." Christianity, he goes on to say, entirely changes the aspect of afflictions. Under the old dispensation, temporal pros-



perity was promised as the reward of obedience, and suffering threatened as the penalty of transgression. Afflictions came to be considered, therefore, as the evidences of the Divine displeasure. There was then scarce any thing to cheer their gloom. Under the Christian dispensation the case is different, for they are seen to be a discipline, which by refining the virtues and improving the character, prepares the soul for higher degrees of spiritual glory. "And not only so, we glory in tribulations also, knowing that tribulation worketh patience, and patience experience, and experience hope, and hope maketh not ashamed."

To keep the soul, he goes on to say, in a course of virtuous action, much aid is derived from the resurrection of Christ. "For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more being reconciled shall we be saved by his life." For as through Adam, a mortal and sinful man, we received a mortal and sinful nature, much more through Christ, a perfect man and raised to immortality, shall we be raised to a perfect and an immortal life.

In the next three chapters he treats of the most difficult topic in the whole Epistle. The Mosaic law being abrogated, and all obligation to obey it annulled, and men are to be received by God on the ground of repentance and faith, the Jew might say,

does not such a doctrine lead to licentiousness? And if we continue to obey a law, what law shall we obey? "Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound?" Shall we continue to sin in the hope of an easy forgiveness? By no means. Our very profession at baptism forbids it. Our baptism was a baptism of repentance. We professed to die unto sin, and to be buried with Christ. If this means any thing, it means, that we must afterwards rise to a new and better life. "How shall we that are dead to sin live any longer therein? Know ye not that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ, were baptized into his death? Therefore are we buried with him by baptism into death, that like as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we should walk in newness of life."

"What then, shall we continue in sin, because we are not under the law, but under grace? God forbid. Know ye not that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey, whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness." But then the question recurs, what is sin under the new dispensation? It is not breaking the old law, for that is abrogated; but it is the violation of some law, or it would not be sin. It must evidently be, as he makes it out to be, the law of the mind, the natural conscience, enlightened by the teachings and example of Jesus Christ. Setting

aside the law of Moses, he finds himself impelled in two opposite directions, or prompted to act by two different laws; the law of the appetites and passions, and the law of conscience or of the mind. "I find then a law, that when I would do good, evil is present with me. For I delight in the law of God after the inward man. But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from this body of death?" What was there to give the preponderance to the law of the mind? "I thank God through Jesus Christ," that is, that he has accomplished this through Jesus Christ. The natural conscience, enlightened and strengthened by Christ and his religion, becomes a sufficient guide to man, and saves him from the dominion of sin.

"There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh but after the spirit." They did not become sinners and make themselves liable to condemnation because they forsook the law of Moses, if they had become real Christians, for they had substituted the law of the natural conscience, enlightened by Christianity for the law of Moses. Now, natural conscience, being the inspiration of the Almighty, may itself be called in the language of that age, the spiritual law of God. For the metaphysics of those

times had not drawn those sharp lines of distinction, which have since been drawn, between what was miraculous and what was ordinary in the operations of God upon the soul of man ; and those who carry our metaphysics into the Bible will grossly deceive themselves. The ancients were accustomed to refer to the Spirit of God, not only knowledge and impulses strictly supernatural, but all that is good in man, and that leads to good. So when we read his language concerning walking after the flesh and after the spirit, we are not to suppose that he means, by walking after the spirit, obeying impulses supernatural, or knowledge derived from immediate inspiration, but only reason and conscience enlightened by Christianity, in opposition to the impulses of the passions and appetites. "For the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus, hath made me free from the law of sin and death." That is, the Gospel has been more efficacious than the law itself, in destroying sin and producing holiness. "For what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh," unable to subdue the carnal passions, "God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin condemned sin in the flesh," that is, by his death sealing its pardon, and by his life and example showing that it does not necessarily inhere in humanity ; so that Christians may fulfil the spirit of the law of Moses, without submitting to its letter ; "that the righteousness

of the law may be fulfilled in us who walk not after the flesh, but after the spirit." "For they that are after the flesh, do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the spirit, the things of the spirit. For to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace." Thus not only the pardon of sin is as amply provided for under the new dispensation as the old, but a law of action is given us in our own consciences, enlightened by Christianity, more efficacious to secure a holy life than the law of Moses itself.

The next subject which he treats, is introduced and managed with the most consummate skill, so much so that its bearing is not perceived by a superficial reader of the Bible. One of the principal boasts of the Jews was, that they were the sons, or children of God. This privilege, Paul says, belongs to the Christian on surer and more legitimate grounds; and his argument is strictly philosophical. A truly religious man, who obeys the impulses of his spiritual nature, feels a filial relation to God, has the conviction that God is his Father, loves him as a child, and confides in him with unlimited trust. This filial confidence in God, to him who possesses it, is a stronger evidence that he is a child of God, than a lineal descent from any parentage on earth. "For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God. For ye have not received the spirit of

bondage again to fear, but ye have received the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. This very spirit bears witness with our spirit that we are the children of God."

The next topic he discusses, is the rejection of the Jews, and the adoption of the Christians. He clears himself of all imputation of personal resentment towards them for their cruel persecutions of him, and says he is so much grieved for their rejection by God, that he could wish himself rejected in their stead, if such a thing might be. This proceeding of God might seem arbitrary, a piece of unjustifiable favoritism on the part of the Deity. But he goes on to show that all privileges are necessarily so. Isaac was chosen for the enjoyment of certain privileges instead of Ishmael; Jacob was chosen in preference to Esau. God has a right to do as he will with his own, so far as what he bestows upon them is concerned, and the part he makes them act in the plan of his providence. This, of course, extends no farther than outward condition, and the instrumentality of certain individuals to accomplish certain ends. The ultimate condition of men is not here referred to, that having been despatched in the second chapter, where he declares, that there is no respect of persons with God.

The last five chapters are taken up in the commendation of certain duties, exhortations to fidelity, and

salutations to his friends, with whom he had become acquainted in other places, but who were now at Rome. The contents of the Epistle may be summed up in few words. The Apostle to the Gentiles sends his greeting to the Christians at Rome, desires to preach among them, and to edify them. He glories in the Gospel as the power of God unto salvation, equally applicable to Jew and heathen. All stand in need of it, because all have sinned; the heathen because he had violated the law of nature, and the Jew because he had broken the law of Moses. The gift of the Gospel is gratuitous in both cases; therefore the Jew has no cause to boast or claim superiority over the Gentile. The Gospel is all-sufficient for the religious wants of man, for it makes provision for the pardon of sin, and though it abrogates the Mosaic law, gives man a better in his own conscience, enlightened by Christianity. Its sufficiency is manifested by the religious experience of every true believer. For he that has believed in Christ and heartily repented, finds peace with God. Trials have lost their power over him, and he rather rejoices in them, and the hopes which the Gospel holds out, especially through the resurrection of Christ, give him spiritual strength, and fill him with all joy and consolation. The true Christian has the best of all evidences of the sufficiency of his religion, in its giving him the filial spirit, which none but a true child of God can possess.

He expresses his deep sorrow for the general rejection of Jesus by the Jews, and their consequent rejection by God. God's designs however, are not frustrated. The Gentiles are taken in their stead, and the proceeding is no more arbitrary than it must be in all the privileges bestowed by God. But these privileges are not final. The Christian may abuse and forfeit them as well as the Jew, and a like fate awaits him if he does. Which things being so, he exhorts all who name the name of Christ to depart from iniquity, to practise every virtue, and abstain from every sin. In conclusion, he says: "I would have you wise unto that which is good, and simple concerning evil; and the God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet."

Paul's Epistle to the Romans has been from the first, the grand arena of controversy. It is probable that it is to this that Peter refers, when he speaks of Paul's having written things hard to be understood, and which were wrested by the unstable and unlearned to their own destruction. It has been quoted to prove the natural inability of man to do the will of God. But in no part of the Scripture is this power so clearly and unequivocally stated. "Those who have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law." "God bestows glory, honor, and peace on those who do well, on the Jew first, and also on the Gentile." It has been made to teach the doctrine of



personal, arbitrary election. But no where is it more categorically declared, that "there is no respect of persons with God;" and even the Christians, who were elected to have the blessings of the Gospel, might finally be cast off as were the Jews. "Behold, therefore, the goodness and severity of God, on them which fell severity, but toward thee goodness, if thou continue in his goodness, otherwise thou also shalt be cut off." And because, according to this Epistle, the heathen was to be admitted into the Christian church, upon his belief in Christ, without the ceremonial law, the monstrous doctrine has been advanced, that the only ground of salvation is faith in Christ, and the imputation of his righteousness without regard to personal conduct, when no words can possibly be plainer than those of this Epistle, that God will render unto every man according to his deeds. The view we have just taken of the Epistle shows us, that so far from being taught, those doctrines are not so much as alluded to by Paul in the whole course of it. We see at the foundation, the same great truths which run through the New Testament, varied, illustrated and adapted to the condition of those whom he sought to instruct and to edify.

## Lecture XVII.

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### THE EPISTLES TO THE CORINTHIANS.

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1 COR. 3: 11,—For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ.

THE Epistles of Paul to the Corinthians, which are the subject of this lecture, differ from the two we have already considered, in being almost wholly practical, whereas they were mainly doctrinal in their character. The Epistle of Paul to the Romans was written to a community which he had never seen, and is therefore a general discourse on the doctrines and duties of the Gospel. The Epistle to the Hebrews is an especial argument directed to the converted Jews of that period, but especially those of Judea. The Epistles to the Corinthians are a portion of a correspondence, the two first letters of which are lost, one of the Corinthians to Paul, and one of Paul to the Corinthians. Being all of a practical nature they are more intelligible than the other Epistles, and want nothing for a full understanding of them but an acquaintance with the circumstances of both correspondents. The obscurity

which arises from the want of this knowledge is common to this correspondence, and any other of the same antiquity. Take up a series of family letters, which chance throws in your way, dating a century back, and however well you may suppose yourselves acquainted with the circumstances under which they were written, you will find many allusions to persons and circumstances, to events and states of the times which you find it impossible to comprehend. Precisely so is it, with the Epistles of Paul. There are allusions in them to things of which we can have no definite idea, because they belonged to the time, and with it forever passed away. He admonishes the Corinthians, for instance, concerning the conduct of their public assemblies, and gives directions as to the exercise of spiritual gifts. As nothing of the kind exists in our days, it is possible for us to form only the most dim conjectures as to the meaning of those passages which refer to them. But it is of little consequence to us whether we understand the admonition or not, for no part of our faith or conduct is to be regulated by it.

But there is an ambiguity in one of these Epistles, which has been more serious in its effects. The Corinthians had abused the Lord's Supper to purposes of intemperance and excess—they had celebrated it in a disorderly and unworthy manner—unworthily, as he says. Not that the persons were

unworthy to partake of it; this he does not intimate, though many of them at this time would be considered far from being exemplary Christians; but he complains that they celebrated it in an unworthy manner. This single misinterpretation has in the Protestant church almost desolated the rite itself. Fenced with such an awful commination, the sacrament has degenerated from an affectionate commemoration of Christ, into a perilous snare for men's souls, the terror of the timid, and the horror of the conscientious.

Corinth was a city of Greece, of great antiquity, opulence and distinction. It is thought to have been founded about the time of the departure of the Israelites from Egypt, and early became as much distinguished for its commercial enterprise and wealth, as Sparta was for its arms, and Athens for its literature. Its situation in the midst of Greece, on an isthmus between two extensive bays, made it, as far as commerce was concerned, first the metropolis of Greece, and then a mart of trade between Western Europe, and Asia and Africa. The navigation of those ages being carried on in small vessels, without the aid of the mariner's compass, could not venture far from land, and it was found more safe to transport merchandise across the isthmus and through the city of Corinth, than to tempt the dangerous sea between the Peloponnesus and the island of Crete, where Paul

was afterwards shipwrecked, and came so near losing his life.

The constant influx of trade from age to age, made Corinth the richest city of Greece. Wealth, in the control of so ingenious a people as the Greeks, gave rise to a wonderful development of the arts, and Corinth became one of the most beautiful cities of the world. Its public buildings were most costly and magnificent, its squares and streets were adorned with beautiful trees and exquisite statuary. It was not wanting in literary cultivation. Extensive schools of philosophy, rhetoric, and the fine arts were established, and men of all professions resorted there from all parts of the world to seek either education, or distinction, or wealth in their several pursuits. Such advantages, without any better guide or restraint than Paganism, produced their natural result—luxury and licentiousness. Its inhabitants became as famous for their dissipation, as for their wealth; and to Corinthize became a proverbial phrase for plunging into the depths of dissoluteness and sensuality. The Pagan religion, every where loose in its moral precepts, here appeared as the patroness of debauchery, and their sacred rites were administered with a strong admixture of animal indulgence.

Among the foreigners who had resorted to this city were a number of Jews, and as in other cities of the Roman empire, they were permitted to have a

synagogue, and the free exercise of their religion. They were even allowed, to a certain extent, the enjoyment of their own civil laws, so that it was unnecessary for them to carry their legal differences before the Roman tribunals. This was the more convenient and advantageous, as they had a form of administering justice, which of all human contrivances, seems to be the most admirably fitted for that purpose, that of arbitration. One of the litigants chose a referee, the other chose another, and they together chose a third, and the decision of the three was final and conclusive.

Such was the condition of Corinth, when in the year fifty-one from the birth of Christ, and eighteen from his ascension, it was visited by Paul, with his companions Silas and Timothy. Of all the cities of Greece, and perhaps of the world, this was the last in which the pure and spiritual doctrines of Christianity could hope to find a reception. In refined and intellectual Athens, the Apostle seems to have made little or no impression. But in Corinth, surfeited by wealth and drowned in pleasure, his doctrine found hearers, and his mission was crowned with success. He was favored by an especial vision of encouragement—of the Saviour saying to him, “Fear not, but speak; and keep not silence; for I am with thee, and no one shall set upon thee to do thee harm; for I have much people in this city.”

As usual in other cities, his first public appearance was in the synagogue. There, every sabbath, he preached to the Jews and proselytes, endeavoring to persuade them that Jesus was the Messiah. In this city he made the acquaintance of Aquila and Priscilla, a Jew and his wife, natives of Pontus in Asia, persons of most estimable character, and who seem to have been his warm and attached adherents as long as he lived. They were tent-makers by trade, and Paul having been educated to the same mechanic art, became an inmate of their house, and to his eternal honor, sustained himself by his daily labor, while on the sabbath days he dispensed the Gospel of salvation. With the Jews, his preaching was not successful. But with the proselytes his doctrines met with a more ready reception. They moreover, holding a middle ground between the Jews and Pagans, gave the Apostle a more ready introduction to those who had taken no interest in the Jewish religion. To facilitate his intercourse with the latter, he changed his lodgings from the house of Aquila and Priscilla, who were Jews, to that of Justus, a proselyte, in the neighborhood of the synagogue. Here he remained for eighteen months, preaching with great success. His success is indicated by the opposition which was excited among the Jews. At the end of a year and a half, they prosecuted him before the Roman Proconsul, for teaching men to worship God contrary to their

law. Gallio was then Proconsul of Achaia, a brother of Seneca the philosopher, a man of great excellence and moderation of character, and he gave the complaint of the Jews just the answer it deserved: "If it were a matter of wrong or wickedness, O ye Jews, it were reasonable for me to listen to you. But if it be a question of words, and names, and of your law, you must settle it among yourselves, for I will be no judge of such matters. And he drove them from the judgment seat."

Paul, seeing his usefulness temporarily suspended by this public disturbance, set the church in order which he had established, and sailed for Syria, taking with him Aquila and Priscilla. The vessel touched at Ephesus, and there his companions took up their residence. He himself, during the stay of the vessel, went into the synagogue of the Jews and taught. He was well received, and invited to remain among them. But he declined for the present, being bound, it is supposed, by a vow which he had made at Cenchreæ, the seaport of Corinth, to be at Jerusalem at the next feast. After visiting Jerusalem, and having made a tour through Asia Minor, confirming the churches, which he had formerly planted, he came again to Ephesus.

Here he had bad accounts of the church which he had planted at Corinth. They had fallen into errors of doctrine, and corruptions of practice. Upon this



he wrote them a letter, which is now lost, concerning principally, as it would seem, an incestuous marriage between a man and his stepmother. This drew from them a letter in reply, which has likewise perished, concerning several matters of faith, morals and discipline. Paul's replies to these enquiries, we have in what we call, the first Epistle to the Corinthians.

After the salutation, the first subject of rebuke, is their partizan character and proceedings. This tendency they derived from the sects of the Pagan philosophy, or perhaps, we may as well say, from the original bias of human nature. The city had been for ages filled with the schools of the different sects of the Grecian philosophy. There were the Stoics, the Epicureans, Peripatetics, the Eclectics and the Academics, all boasting to belong to the school of Zeno, or Plato, Carneades, or Epicurus. When Paul came among them, and afterward Apollos, preaching Jesus as the founder of their religion, they introduced into the Christian church the habit so universal among the followers of the Greek philosophers, of calling themselves according to their individual preferences after the principal Christian teachers. One said that he was of Paul, another that he was of Apollos, another who might have been a hearer of Peter in some other quarter of the world, said he was of Cephas, another that he was of Christ.

The Apostle assures them, that nothing of the kind can take place in the Christian church. Christ sustains a relation to the church which cannot be shared. He is the foundation. "Other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ." Paul did not pretend to have set up a religion of his own, but only to act as the minister of Christ. "Was Paul crucified for you, or were ye baptized into the name of Paul? Who is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers by whom ye believed?"

Not only are there to be no sects in Christianity, but the Gospel does not depend, like the systems of heathen philosophy, on the ingenuity, the argument, or the eloquence of man. It is addressed to the moral, rather than the intellectual nature, and therefore depends for its power over men, not on the learning or intellect of the teacher, but on his simplicity, earnestness, and sincerity; it is propagated more by moral sympathy, than intellectual acuteness. Therefore it was, that he and his fellow teachers entered into no competition with the sophists and philosophers, of whom their city was full, but merely, in the simplest language, preached the plain facts of the Christian religion, not leaving out the most humiliating of them, the death of Christ upon the cross, "to the Jews a stumbling block, and to the Greeks foolishness," but to the true Christian, "Christ, the power of God, and the wisdom of God." But fool-

ish as the preaching of the Gospel might appear, it had shown itself an instrument more powerful for the moral regeneration of the world, than all the boasted philosophy of the heathen world. "For, after that, in the wisdom of God, the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe." There was the thing demonstrated before their eyes. There were the schools of human philosophy in full operation among them, with all the subtilty of cultivated intellect, and all the splendor of learning and eloquence. And what had they effected? Absolutely nothing. The city was wholly given to idolatry, and sunk in dissipation. Paul had been there but eighteen months, preaching Jesus and him crucified, and laboring with his hands to obtain his daily bread, and he had accomplished more than they all; thereby settling forever a question, which the wisdom of this age has re-opened as if yet undecided, that Christianity is a religion of authority, not of abstract reasoning,—that the facts of the New Testament are the mainsprings of its power, and deprived of them, Paul, when reduced to establish the doctrines of Christianity by appeal to the nature of things, would have found himself just as impotent for the moral renovation of the world as the philosophers, who for so many ages had disputed in their schools in vain. What the human mind wanted at that period, and all periods,

was not a clearer conviction of what was right, for no portion of the human race ever had a clearer knowledge of this than these very Greeks. What they wanted was, motive to do as well as they knew. What they wanted, was the knowledge of God as Christ had revealed him, to breathe life into their moral conceptions, and give them the commanding power of religious conviction.

The next subject he takes up, is a point of Christian morality. One of the converts had married within the degrees prohibited by the Jewish law, which was adopted likewise by the Christians, and had thereby given scandal to the church. It was necessary to animadvert on such an outrage with the greatest severity, especially in such a city as Corinth, where public morals were more corrupted than in any other portion of the civilized world. There is nothing more opposed to the spirit of Christianity than licentiousness, and no point in which our religion has been more beneficial to the world. Religious faith is the only barrier against it, both in individuals and communities, and the first consequence of the abandonment of religious faith, is almost always found to be a plunge into the mire of sensuality.

The next topic he treats is that of litigation. In a commercial place like Corinth, there would naturally be often a conflict of rights and interests. In such cases, there was not only a disposition to resort

to the civil tribunals, but to resort to the heathen in matters which might as well have been settled among themselves ; and he advises them rather to suffer wrong, than to indulge in this unchristian practice. " Dare any of you, having a matter against another, go to law before the unjust, and not before the saints? Do ye not know that the saints shall judge the world, and if the world shall be judged by you, are ye unworthy to judge the smallest matters? Know ye not that we shall judge angels, how much more things that pertain to this life? If then ye have judgment of things pertaining to this life, set them to judge who are least esteemed in the church. I speak to your shame. Is it so, that there is not a wise man among you, no, not one, that shall be able to judge between his brethren?" It is easier to perceive the propriety of referring their disputes to their Christian brethren, than to see the pertinency of the reasoning on which it is founded. Though somewhat mysterious itself, it serves to throw light on the meaning of those passages in which it is said that the Messiah shall judge the world. This idea was undoubtedly derived from the prophecy of Daniel, in which he says : " The kingdom and the fulness of the kingdom shall be given to the saints of the Most High ;" and they are to reign with their king Messiah over the nations. The Messiah was to be superior to the angels, according to the Jewish Demonology, and his

followers, partaking of his exaltation, were to be participants of that superiority.

He next proceeds to warn them against the licentiousness, which prevailed around them, and answers a question which they seem to have put to him in their letter, appealing to him for his advice as to the religious obligations of a married or a single life. He seems to have given them an idea during his ministry among them, of the superior sanctity of a life of celibacy. He answers them, that they had misapprehended him in that particular, that what he had said had reference to the present condition of the church, in a state of persecution, and danger, that it was a question of expediency, rather than of duty. In the present state of things, he, as a man, but not as an Apostle, advises certain descriptions of them to lead a single life. Times were soon coming, when by reason of the persecutions, which fell upon the Christians in the reign of Nero, there would be no comfort in domestic life, when families would be so scattered, and persecuted, and hunted, that those who had wives should be as though they had none, and all should hardly have opportunity to bewail their calamities.

Another question of daily practical life, was the regulation of their intercourse with idolaters. The heathen religions were interwoven with the transactions of every day, and with all the forms of

society. In their offerings to their idols, a part only of the victim was consumed, the rest was eaten by the worshipper and his friends. Some of the Corinthians, upon the strength of their knowledge of the nothingness of idols, made no scruple to sit and eat in an idol's temple. But others, who had not such strength of conviction, were scandalized at such a sight, and looked upon such participation as defilement. For their sakes, the Apostle tells them, that it was proper to abstain. "When ye sin so against the brethren, and wound their weak consciences, ye sin against Christ. Wherefore, if meat make my brother to offend, I will eat no flesh while the world standeth." Moreover, he says, that participation in idol feasts would seem to be inconsistent with their allegiance to Christ. For as the Israelites were baptized to Moses in the cloud and in the sea, and did drink of the water miraculously given them from the rock, the allegiance which they owed to Moses was analogous to that which the Christians acknowledged to Christ by baptism and the Lord's Supper. As the idolatry of the Israelites in the wilderness was treason to Moses and to God, so participation in the idolatrous worship of the Corinthians ought to be considered an act of apostacy from Christ. "I speak as to wise men, judge ye what I say; the cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? the bread which we break, is it not the com-

munion of the body of Christ? Ye cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of devils; ye cannot be partakers of the Lord's table and the table of devils."

Paul, when he was at Corinth, instead of drawing his support from those to whom he ministered, as it was ordained by Christ, had wrought with his own hands to supply his necessities. This, after his departure, was brought up against him, either as degrading him, or as arising from a conscious want of apostolic authority. He goes on to tell them why he had done so. Preaching the Gospel was a necessity laid on him by God, and he could not refuse to do so. "If I do this thing willingly, I have a reward, but if against my will, a stewardship is committed to me. What is my reward then? Verily, that when I preach the Gospel, I may make the Gospel of Christ without charge, that I abuse not my power in the Gospel."

The next subject is the regulation of their religious assemblies. He gives some directions for the costume in which the Christians of both sexes should appear in their public worship, and then passes on to the communion, which they had grossly abused. Having been accustomed all their days to the idolatrous feasts of the heathen world, which were too often occasions of intemperance and excess, they formed the same low and sensual conceptions of the purposes of the Lord's supper, and overlooked en-



tirely its symbolic and spiritual character. The consequence was, that it was no longer to them an occasion of religious edification, but of degrading indulgence; so that they came together not for the better, but for the worse. The Apostle displays to them the impiety and criminality of their conduct. Those he says, who thus pervert the rite, not only get no good from it, but make it an occasion of sin, and thus eat and drink to themselves, not edification, but condemnation.

Among the disorders of their public assemblies was an abuse of spiritual gifts. An obscurity hangs over this subject, which perhaps can never be dissipated, arising from the fact that we can form only dim conjectures of what those gifts were. The most we know of it is, that they were the occasion of confusion in their public services, and envy and emulation among the members. The Apostle enumerates no less than eight classes of persons as officiating in the early Christian assemblies, Apostles, prophets, teachers, workers of miracles, healers of diseases, assistants, rulers, and speakers in different languages. What part these different persons took in the exercises of their public assemblies, we are unable even so much as to conjecture. The most we know is, that some composed hymns, some prayed, some taught, some spoke in foreign languages, and others interpreted what was spoken. What the Apostle

complained of was, that they were not orderly in the exercise of these gifts, but with an indiscreet zeal, or ostentatious forwardness, insisted on obtruding their spiritual contributions upon the assembly without waiting for each other. The result was, great confusion and disorder in the church: "When ye come together, every one of you hath a psalm, hath a doctrine, hath a tongue, hath a revelation, hath an interpretation. Let every thing be done for edification. If any one speak with a tongue, let it be no more than two, and at most three, and that in succession, and let some one interpret. But if there be no interpreter, let him keep silence in the assembly. Let the prophets speak not more than two or three on the same occasion. And the spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets. For God is not the author of confusion, but of peace."

Finally, he comes to the great and cardinal doctrine of the resurrection, and he makes concerning it one of the sublimest discourses in the New Testament. He considers it, what indeed it is, the pivot on which the whole religion of Christ turns; "If Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain." Nothing can be more satisfactory, than to see this Apostle, whom we might at first suspect of some tendency to enthusiasm, resting his own faith and that of the church, upon the simple facts of the Gospel, so plain, so palpable, so level

with the meanest capacity to all time. The Gospel was true and authoritative, not because it was a probable human speculation, man was to live again and be judged according to the deeds done in the body, not because there is a natural presentiment in his breast that such is to be the fact, but because Jesus of Nazareth, who had taught this doctrine on the authority of God, had been raised from the dead by Almighty power, and been seen and recognised by his former companions and disciples. This great fact, he makes the corner stone of the Gospel, and justly, for on it depends the certain conviction of two of the most important truths which concern man's duty and destiny—the divine origin of the doctrines which Jesus taught, and the certainty that the moment which severs the soul from the body does not consign it to oblivion, but makes it a denizen of immensity and eternity. This was in fact the Gospel of salvation to the world, for moral instruction was not so much the want of man as religious conviction; a clearer knowledge of duty was not so indispensable, as a more cogent motive for its performance. It was this which made the humble Apostle, preaching Jesus and the resurrection, more powerful to the moral regeneration of the world, than all the schools of the philosophers, with all their learning, refinement and eloquence.

But the doctrine of the resurrection, it seems, had

excited some objections as to its physical possibility: "How are the dead raised up and with what body do they come?" This physical difficulty has laid at the foundation of all the doubt that has ever existed upon this subject. But after all, nothing can be more idle and weak, when viewed in the light of that very philosophy, which raises the objection. No possible state of the soul can seem antecedently more improbable, than that in which it now exists, in connexion with the body. How that which is immaterial can come in contact with that which is material, how the brain, which is itself senseless, inert matter, can convey feeling to the soul, apparently a thing without parts, extension, or solidity, and be its organ of thought, memory and volition, is just as difficult to be conceived as the exercise of those powers in a disembodied state. All must ultimately be referred to the will of God, with whom all things are alike possible. He, who could first create the soul, endow it with its wonderful powers and capacities, and place it in such incomprehensible relations to the body, and with the universe, could continue that existence under any circumstances, which would seem best to his infinite wisdom.

The answer then of Paul to the objector is perfectly legitimate and conclusive; "Thou fool, that which thou sowest, thou sowest not that body which shall be, but bare grain; it may be of wheat or of some

other grain, but God giveth it a body as it hath pleased him, and to every seed his own body. All flesh is not the same flesh, but there is one kind of flesh of men, another flesh of beasts, and another of fishes, and another of birds. There are also celestial bodies and bodies terrestrial; but the glory of the celestial is one, and the glory of the terrestrial is another. There is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars, for one star differeth from another star in glory. So also is the resurrection of the dead, it is sown in corruption, it is raised in incorruption. It is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness, it is raised in power. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory. Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast and unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord."

This Epistle, which is chiefly one of admonition and reproof, did not produce its full effect. In it he told them that he should visit them shortly. But soon after this, there arose a great excitement at Ephesus, caused by the silversmiths, which terminated in the

riot at the theatre. This detained the Apostle, and prevented his fulfilling his promise, and gave his opponents an opportunity to say, that he was fickle of purpose. After those troubles were over, however, he sailed to Macedonia, but was still unwilling to go to Corinth, before his first Epistle had had time to reform and pacificate the church. He therefore wrote them another letter, which we have as the second Epistle to the Corinthians, in which he merely reiterates his former admonitions, and reasserts in stronger terms, his Apostolic authority, which they were disposed to call in question. In them both we have the effusions of a strong and full mind, ready sympathies, and a noble heart. The impression is every where conveyed of entire sincerity of conviction, and deep earnestness of purpose, scrupulous delicacy of character, and absolute disinterestedness. They contribute to throw an air of reality over the whole narrative of the first planting of Christianity, and so weave together sacred history with profane, ordinary with supernatural events into a consistent whole, that they plant the whole in our faith as among the unchangeable records of the past. They show us the Christian church just struggling into existence, in the first process of purification from the ignorance and pollutions of idolatry, and the Gospel vindicating to itself on the very threshold of its existence, the character given it by its most zealous

Apostle, as "the power of God unto salvation." We see, that from the first, it encountered the same difficulties, which have beset it in every age, the corruption of its simple doctrines by human philosophy, and the resistance of human passions to its pure and holy precepts. They show us that Christianity is a religion and not a philosophy, is founded on fact and not on speculation, not resting on argument but on authority, and to be propagated, not so much by the artifices of human eloquence, as by a simple, serious, devout and earnest spirit. To be studied with profit, they are to be read, not in detached parts and isolated sentences, but after having obtained a general idea of the purpose of the whole, we may take up the parts, one after another, and passages at first dark as midnight, become clear as the noon-day.

## Lecture XVIII.

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### ANALYSIS OF THE NEW TESTAMENT.

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1 Cor. 15: 13—15.—But if there be no resurrection of the dead, then is Christ not risen. And if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain. Yea, and we are found false witnesses of God, because we have testified of God, that he raised up Christ, whom he raised not up, if so be that the dead rise not.

It is the purpose of this lecture to analyze the New Testament into its constituent elements, and then to arrange those elements in the order of their importance to the Christian faith and life.

An analysis of any thing is the separation of it into parts, drawing the real distinctions which exist between the parts, and then the arrangement of the parts in the order either of their magnitude, or their importance, or some other quality in which we compare them with each other. The success of the attempt at analysis is to be judged of, by the fact, whether the analysis exhausts and embraces the whole, whether the distinctions drawn between the parts are real and important, and whether they are



arranged according to their intrinsic rank and consequence.

Keeping these principles in view, I shall proceed to analyze the contents of the New Testament into— 1, historical facts; 2, doctrines; 3, opinions; 4, modes of speech or mere phraseology. If I am successful in this analysis, I shall be able to afford you no little aid to a clear understanding of the oracles of our faith.

The first and fundamental element of our religion, is historical facts. It is this which draws the line between the New Testament and all books of human production. It is this which makes Christianity a religion, and not a philosophy; a Divine institution, and not a human contrivance; a record of certain truths, instead of a record of uncertain opinions; a system of doctrines to be taught upon authority, and not a series of speculations to be proposed upon the ground of their probability alone. This is the ground upon which the New Testament places itself before the world. It takes the position of a miraculous communication from God, sealed as coming from him by certain interruptions of the common course of nature, which God alone could effect. This was the uniform representation of Christ himself. He proposes his doctrines to the world, not as the probable speculations of human reason, but as certain truths which he had received from God, and taught on the

authority of God; "I have not spoken of myself, but the Father which sent me, he gave me a commandment, what I should say, and what I should speak. And I know that his commandment is life everlasting. Whatsoever I speak therefore, even as the Father said unto me, so I speak." In his last prayer with his disciples, "I have given them the words which thou hast given me, and they have received them, and have known surely that I came out from thee, and they have believed that thou didst send me." "If I do not the works of my Father, believe me not, but if I do, though ye believe not me, believe the works, that ye may know that the Father is in me, and I in him."

Perfectly consistent with this position which he assumed, was the mode of his teaching. He bases nothing on argument or deduction; he proposes nothing to be received or rejected as probable or improbable. He announces every thing as a doctrine received by him from God, and resting on his authority as a teacher sent by God. After such declarations there is no middle ground. His doctrines failing of support as inspired by God, cannot fall upon the next ground of philosophy. Nor can Jesus, failing to sustain his position as a teacher miraculously authenticated by God, take that of a wise philosopher. He becomes an impostor, or at

best a reformer, resorting to pious fraud to introduce his salutary doctrines into the world.

That Christ regarded his religion as one of authority and miraculous attestation, will appear from the light in which he viewed his Apostles. He called them around him not as disciples to his doctrines merely, and the future teachers of them to the world, but as witnesses—witnesses of his miraculous credentials, “Ye also shall bear witness, because ye have been with me from the beginning.” After his resurrection, he says to them, “And ye shall be witnesses to me, both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost parts of the earth.” He commissions them to teach the doctrines which they had received of him not as a man, but as a teacher sent by God; “As my Father hath sent me, so send I you.” Or as Matthew has it, “All authority is given me in heaven and earth,” that is, full authority for the purpose; “Go ye therefore, and teach all nations.”

And so it was that the Apostles understood their commission. They commenced their preaching by bearing witness to the resurrection. They chose another Apostle in the place of Judas with reference to this very purpose: “Wherefore, of these men which companied with us all the time that the Lord Jesus went out and in among us, beginning from the baptism of John unto that same day that he was

taken up from us, ~~most~~ one be ordained to be a witness with us of his resurrection." Peter in his first speech to the Jews, bases the claim of his master to their belief and obedience upon the miraculous attestations of God to his mission and teaching: "Ye men of Israel, hear these words, Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you, by miracles, and signs, and wonders, which God did by him in the midst of you, as ye yourselves also know, whom God hath raised up, whereof we are witnesses. Wherefore, let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ." Such too were the sentiments of Paul; "The Gospel of God, concerning his Son Jesus Christ our Lord, who was made of the seed of David, according to the flesh, and declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead." It was to this great event, that the mind of the Apostle recurred in his old age, when a prisoner at Rome, in daily expectation of a cruel death: "Remember that Jesus Christ was raised from the dead, according to my Gospel, for which cause I suffer affliction unto bonds." Peter gives it a like prominence in the Gospel system; "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to his abundant mercy, hath begotten

us again unto a lively hope, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead."

Such is the fundamental character of the historical facts of the Christian religion, according to the representations of Jesus and his Apostles. No less so was it with the Christians of the first three centuries, as is proved by the earliest creed we have, that of the Apostles, as it is called. "I believe in God, the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth, and in Jesus Christ his only Son, our Lord, who was conceived of the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead and buried: The third day he rose from the dead, ascended into heaven," &c. Here you see none of the abstract doctrines which have since been introduced into the creed of the church, but simple historical facts, level with the understandings of all.

These have constituted the power of Christianity in all ages. What has most given it majesty and authority in the minds of men, is the fact of its having been introduced into the world through a breach in the adamantine walls, which environ the dread order of nature. As the Jewish mind ever recurred to the passage through the Red Sea, the thunder of Sinai, and the cleaving of the Jordan, and not to the superior excellence of the laws of Moses, as the ground of their reverence, attachment and allegiance, so have the Christians ever recurred to the grave of Lazarus,

to the funeral of Nain, and especially to the sepulchre and the mount of ascension, and, of consequence, to the glorified and immortal existence of Jesus, as the great distinction of their religion above all the systems of human philosophy. Such is human nature. Such is the quick and etherial capacity of the human soul, of being addressed and taught by God by other means than words. He teaches by things and events, which the soul interprets with the rapidity and certainty of light. It is thus with his own existence. There never was a verbal argument to prove the existence of God, which did not seem, after all, an elaborate mockery, or at best, a superfluous trifling, an attempt to express, in a clumsy proposition of verbal logic, a truth which is read in every leaf and is spoken by every voice in nature, from the purling of the brook to the howling of the storm and the roll of the thunder.

Just so was it in teaching man his duty. He did it most effectually by facts. He sent Jesus in human form to walk the plains of Judea, and tread the rounds of human duty spotless and sinless, subjected him to every species of trial, to exhibit through the whole, unshaken fortitude, unerring wisdom, unconquerable love. Christ himself was a Gospel of duty to man, more intelligible and commanding than all his discourses. Would God teach man his destiny? He suffers this wonderful model of all possible

excellence to expire upon the cross in the presence of multitudes of witnesses, consigns him to the tomb hewn out of the rock, shut in by a stone rolled to the door of the sepulchre, sealed by legal authority, and watched over by a guard of soldiers—then through stone, and seal, and soldiery, raises him from the dead, shows him openly to multitudes, subjects him to the senses of chosen witnesses, and then takes him to heaven in open day and in the presence of his previous friends and disciples.

These are the things which catch the eye of faith as it glances back through the ages to the origin of Christianity, and they speak a language intelligible to those to whom the written word is a sealed book. It was this feature of Christianity, its being founded on a few plain historical facts, and in a manner expressed and embodied in them, which fitted it to live, and reign, and sanctify the soul through those ages of intellectual darkness, which soon settled on the world after the establishment of Christianity. The Gospel was preached to the eyes and hearts of multitudes by painting and sculpture, from whose minds the words of Jesus were shut up in the mute pages of a mysterious book. The infant Saviour, heralded by angels, and honored by the sages of the East, even when abased to the rude usages of a manger, spoke the great fact of the Divine interposition for human salvation. The cross on which he died, became the

cherished symbol of the mercy of God to sinful, erring man; and whether borne on the bosom of beauty, or glittering upon the spires of churches, spoke the same universal language, which had been expressed by every sacrifice from the offering of Abel to the crucifixion of Christ, the need of guilty man of pardon from on high, and the readiness of the Father of men to forgive his repentant offspring. To all, both cultivated and barbarian, once the threshold of nothingness and oblivion, the sepulchre transfigured by the resurrection of Jesus, has become the vestibule of immortality, and the fact that he who was once our teacher here on earth, is now a glorified spirit in the invisible world, bows our hearts before the doctrines which he taught, more than all the demonstrations of human wisdom.

Such is man, and such is the adaptation of the Gospel to his wants. I do not deny, that there may be some spirits of a finer texture, or a more exquisite culture, who do not need these external signatures of God to the truth of Christianity, but who read its divinity in every line and sentiment. But the majority of mankind are not gifted with such acuteness of moral and spiritual discernment. They are obliged to rest on such evidence as satisfied Nicodemus. "Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God, for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him." Or the man that



was restored to sight, having been born blind; "Since the world began it was not heard, that any man opened the eyes of the blind. If this man were not of God, he could do nothing."

Having thus examined the credentials of the Teacher, and found them satisfactory, it becomes a matter of the highest moment to ascertain the doctrines which he taught. This becomes a matter of the greater importance, as it is evident at first glance, that every thing in the New Testament is not doctrine. Christ came as a religious teacher, to make known to us on satisfactory authority all that is necessary for us, as religious beings to know, in order to obtain eternal happiness. He came not to anticipate the discoveries of science, or to correct the false opinions which had prevailed in consequence of the want of science, upon the subjects of astronomy, metaphysics, physiology, &c. It was necessary for him to use the current language of the time upon these subjects. Any departure from it would have involved him in vexatious and profitless controversy with his contemporaries, entirely foreign to the purposes of his mission. And if he had thought it necessary to set the world right on every collateral subject before he could teach them religion, the last sun of his ministry would have set before he would have prepared the way for the commencement of his real mission. When therefore, he uses the language of

the age, which implies the truth of certain opinions, in illustration of the truths which he taught, neither he, nor his religion, can justly be made responsible for the truth of those opinions. Hence arises the necessity of drawing a distinction between the doctrines of Christ, and the opinions adverted to in the New Testament. The former are to be received as a part of our faith, the latter as opinions belonging to the time, and are to be received or rejected according to their own intrinsic probability. For instance, in the parable of the sower, Jesus speaks of the rising of the sun. This expression is conformed to the astronomy of the time, which supposed the earth to be placed in the centre, and the sun, moon, and stars to revolve round it. Modern astronomy has discovered that this is not the fact. It is an optical illusion. The sun is stationary, and neither rises nor sets. The earth turns on its axis, and produces that appearance. But was it necessary for Jesus, before he uttered that exquisite parable, so full of truth and beauty, to pause and explain the true nature of the solar system? His audience would have either disputed his assertions, or laughed him to scorn. Are we then to make it an article of Christian faith, to be forced upon men's consciences, upon the authority of Christ, that the sun actually rises, and that the modern system of astronomy is false, because such an inference may be drawn from the language of Christ?

Just so it was with regard to the language which he uses concerning demoniacal possession. It was supposed that many diseases, particularly derangement, were caused by the devil, or were the work of malignant spirits, just as our ancestors a few hundred years ago believed in witches. The progress of science dispelled this superstition, and attributed these phenomena to their real cause, the disorder of the brain or nervous system. Is Christ, because he adopted the language which was based upon this superstition, to be made responsible for the truth of this hypothesis? By no means. He never made it a subject of direct teaching. He never made a positive assertion concerning it. It was an opinion which had prevailed long before his ministry, and one which he saw fit neither to assert nor deny. It may be said, that he used language which seemed to imply the truth of the hypothesis of demoniacal possession; and so he did with regard to the sun's rising. But as it was no part of his office to teach astronomy or physiology, he naturally and properly adopted the language which was in common use at that period upon these subjects, leaving to the progress of science to correct the errors which then prevailed.

I speak of Jesus as the sole fountain of doctrine in the Christian religion. The Evangelists contain the Gospel, and the whole Gospel. They, from the very nature of the case, contain all that is essential to it.

No doctrine can be a fundamental doctrine of the Gospel, which is not found there. The Apostles were merely disciples and teachers, not originators, not co-ordinate with Christ in any respect. They were to teach their converts "to observe whatsoever he had commanded them."

The doctrines of Christianity are to be sought solely in the discourses and parables of Christ. There they are expressed with a power and a beauty, which leave all human wisdom and eloquence behind. Their very want of technical system and arrangement is one of the evidences of their Divine original. All the systems of ethics and religion, which the wit of man has framed, when contrasted with the Gospel, appear like the little beds, and terraces, and walks of a garden, when compared with the boundless and diversified exuberance of universal nature, of hill and valley, of mountain and stream, of field and forest, of ocean and continent.

The very attempt to reduce them to a system belittles and degrades them. This, however, sometimes becomes necessary in order to separate them from the mere opinions of the time with which they come to us associated, just as diamonds and precious stones are found in various combinations with sand, or clay, or slate, or granite.

What then are the doctrines of Christianity? Christ himself has told us what are the fundamental doc-

trines of his religion. The first of all the commandments, is: "Hear, O Israel, Jehovah your God, Jehovah is one. And thou shalt love Jehovah thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength; and the second is like unto it: Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." He teaches, or rather assumes as the grand postulate of all religion, the being, the perfections, and the providence of God. The main truths indeed, are not formally laid down in so many abstract propositions. But they are taught every where directly and indirectly. They are all implied and embodied in that one expression, which he teaches us to apply to the great Author of our being: "Our Father, who art in heaven." "Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing, and not one of them falleth to the ground without your Father. Are not ye of more value than many sparrows?"

He taught the freedom, the moral nature, and the consequent accountability of man. All this is asserted in the parable of the talents. It is besides, implied in all his precepts, in all his promises, and in all his threatenings. The boundless mercy and placability of the Almighty to the penitent, is most clearly assured by the exquisite parable of the prodigal son. "When he was yet a great way off, his Father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck and kissed him."

He taught expressly and repeatedly the efficacy of

prayer. "Ask, and ye shall receive; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you. What man is there of you, whom if his son ask bread, will he give him a stone, or if he ask a fish, will he give him a serpent? If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more shall your Father who is in heaven, give good things to them that ask him?"

He taught the doctrine of immortality. The Sadducees came to him with their objections to this doctrine, amounting as they supposed, to a demonstration. "Ye do greatly err," says he, "not knowing the Scriptures, nor the power of God. The children of this world marry and are given in marriage, but they who shall be accounted worthy to obtain that world, and the resurrection from the dead, neither marry, nor are given in marriage. Neither can they die any more, for they are equal to the angels, being children of the resurrection."

He taught a righteous retribution beyond the grave. "They that have done good, shall rise to the resurrection of life, and they that have done evil to the resurrection of condemnation." "Well done, thou good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord. Thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things. Take ye the unprofitable servant, and cast him into outer

darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth."

Nothing can be plainer than the whole system of human duty as taught by Christ. Every thing is obligatory on a Christian, which is commanded by the moral nature of man, the natural sense of justice, which God has implanted in every heart. "Whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them." "Even of yourselves, judge ye not what is right?" His instructions concerning duty, however, are not like the laws of Moses, a collection of specific precepts, but rather a statement of general principles, to be applied by the conscience to every particular case. They are addressed to the spiritual and moral nature of man, and in it they find a sufficient interpreter. The result is, that nothing can be plainer than Christian duty. The character of a Christian is one, which is liable to few mistakes. The only difficulty of understanding the instructions of Christ concerning duty is, that the world has never seen them realized. The mark of perfection was set up by Christ eighteen centuries ago, far in advance of the onward march of the human race. Since that time, they have left far in their rear the point which they then had reached, but still the mark is as far before them as ever. Every step of moral attainment adds acuteness to the power of their spiritual discernment, and reveals to them a profounder mean-

ing and wider amplitude in the simple teaching of Jesus of Nazareth; and to the end of time, the word Christian will represent each age a higher standard of human attainment. "Be ye perfect, even as your Father who is in heaven, is perfect." Such are the cardinal doctrines of Christ; and they are amply sufficient for the faith, and life, and hope of man.

Connected with these is a variety of opinions belonging to the time and to the age, which are found in the New Testament, not in the way of doctrine, but of allusion or illustration. They make no part of Christianity, and for them Christianity is not responsible. I have already mentioned some. The number might be greatly increased. As we must place the doings of the devil in the age of Christ, to the account of traditionary opinions, so must we his agency in preceding ages, especially in the temptation and fall of mankind. So likewise the introduction of physical death by the first sin of Adam. These opinions are alluded to, but are far from being taught as a part of Christianity.

Among the opinions incorporated into the substance of the New Testament, must be reckoned the interpretations of the Old Testament, which we meet with from time to time. These were generally Rabbinical and traditionary. The Jews in quoting the Old Testament were accustomed to apply to their Messiah and the coming dispensation, not only those



passages which were really prophetic, but others which might be so applied. Christ himself adopted this mode of accommodating Scripture to present circumstances. In speaking of the base treachery of Judas Iscariot, he quotes a passage from one of the Psalms of David, in which he complains of the defection of an intimate friend: "He that hath eaten bread with me, hath lifted up his heel against me." Now no man in reading the Psalm, out of which this is quoted, would suppose that this was in any sense prophetic. Nor is it necessary for us to suppose, that Christ intended to assert, that it is to be so considered. He merely adopted a mode of quoting the Old Testament common at that time, remarking a coincidence between an event or a sentiment in the old record, familiar to every mind, with something then taking place. This being the case, that passages both prophetic and historical are quoted in the same form, it follows as a consequence, that we are left to our own judgments to decide, which are, and which are not, prophetic, by the connection in which they originally occur.

The claims of Christ to our credence and confidence do not ultimately rest on the fulfilment of prophecy, but on the credentials which he brought with him. The only purpose of prophecy could have been to excite an expectation of him, and to prepare the world for his coming. Prophecy alone,

without miraculous attestation, could never have identified his person, or fixed upon him the faith of the world.

Then, interwoven with the history of Christ and Christianity, as they actually appeared, are the opinions and expectations which then prevailed of what he was to be. The Apostles and Evangelists, who were the historians of his life, when they became his disciples, were imbued with these opinions and expectations. Their views were only gradually modified and corrected by what he actually was, and the mission he actually accomplished. The consequence is, that the New Testament is, in a manner, the history of the engrafting of the real and true Messiah, on the erroneous expectations of the Jews.

Hence results the fourth and residuary element of the New Testament, the language and phraseology of the times, of the nation, and of the age. Christ could not create a new language to correspond to his new religion; he could only adopt what was already in existence. He could only use old words in new significations. He did not cast his religion into the fountain head of the stream of time, but only after it had swelled to a river. He could only, therefore, gradually tinge its waters, not color at once its whole volume. The epithet, Son of God, had been applied to the expected Messiah long before he was born. He could not do otherwise than assume it, when he

assumed the office to which it was appropriated. He did so, and when accused by the Jews of arrogating to himself some participation in the Divine nature, he explicitly told them that he made no such pretension; but took it solely on the ground that God had sanctified him and sent him into the world: "The Jews answered him, saying: For a good work we stone thee not, but for blasphemy; and because that thou being a man, makest thyself God. Jesus answered them, It is written in your law, I said ye are gods. If he called them gods, to whom the word of God came, and the Scripture cannot be broken, say ye of him, whom the Father hath sanctified and sent into the world, thou blasphemest, because I said, I am the Son of God?"—a disclaimer which ought to have put a perpetual bar to the stupendous perversion which was made, in after ages, of the same phraseology. Just so it was with the language which was in use when he came, concerning the new dispensation, under the figure of the kingdom of heaven. He adopted this figure, and made it the means of impressing spiritual truth. He applied it to that wide and mighty sway he was to exercise over the minds of men by the truths which he taught: "Thou sayest well that I am a king. To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness to the truth. Every one that is of the

truth, heareth my voice ;" that is, is my true and loyal subject.

The very same is the case with the sacrificial language of the New Testament. It is found in the New Testament, not because the death of Christ was a real sacrifice, for a human sacrifice is one of the most shocking and revolting ideas that can enter the mind,—nothing could cast a darker blot on the character of God,—but because sacrifice was one of the principal religious ideas of the Jews, and might be used to illustrate the relation of Christ to God and the Church. There was a remote analogy between the significance of the Jewish sacrifices in symbolizing the penitence of man and the forgiveness of God, and the effect of the death of Christ in bringing man to faith, penitence and reconciliation. The most affecting phraseology concerning Christ, who died to bring about the spiritual renovation of man, and his reconciliation to God, that could be used to a Jew, whose priesthood daily offered up a lamb in sacrifice, morning and evening, for fifteen hundred years, was to call him "the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world," or, "the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world." Such figurative language, however, causes no serious mistake, as long as its figurative character is kept in view. It is, on the other hand, highly affecting and edifying. It only leads to mistake and confusion,

when it is taken literally, and the literal and essential truths are made to be subservient to it.

Such then is the analysis, which I offer you, of the contents of the New Testament. That the analysis is perfect, I do not pretend. To my mind, however, Historical Facts, Doctrines, Opinions, and Phraseology, seem to present a division which is real, important and useful; and which seems to embrace and exhaust the whole material of the records of our faith. "I speak as to wise men. Judge ye what I say."

I have now completed the course of lectures on the History of Christianity, which I proposed four months ago to give you. I have given you the results of seventeen years of diligent investigation directed to the study of the Bible, with the best aids which the present state of theological science affords. I leave off, not because I have exhausted the subject, but because, unassisted as I am, I find that my mind and health will not bear any longer such intense and perpetual application.

If I have enabled you to read your Bibles with more pleasure, intelligence, and edification, I have accomplished the purpose which I have had in view.

THE END.

#### ERRATA.

- Page 107, line 1, for "Proseuchac," read "Proseuchæ."  
" 167, " 26, for "of the God," read "of God."  
" 177, " 10, for "Then shall these," read "These shall."  
" 198, " 22, for "their," read "the."  
" 273, " 14, for "then," read "than."  
" 293, " 5, for "crownest," read "crownedst."



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